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*Manuals of Religious Instruction
for Pupil Teachers.*

EDITED BY

JOHN PILKINGTON NORRIS, M.A.

CANON OF BRISTOL

THE OLD TESTAMENT. Five Parts.

THE NEW TESTAMENT. Five Parts.

THE PRAYER BOOK. Five Parts.

Small 8vo. 1s. each Part.

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THE
OLD TESTAMENT

BY THE REV.

E. I. GREGORY, M.A.

VICAR OF HALBERTON

FIRST YEAR'S COURSE



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Contents

LESSON	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	I
II. THE CREATION	5
III. ADAM AND THE FALL	11
IV. CAIN AND ABEL—NOAH AND THE DELUGE—BABEL AND THE DISPERSION	21 •
V. MANKIND AFTER THE FLOOD—ABRAHAM . . .	31
VI. ABRAHAM— <i>continued</i>	39
VII. ISAAC	45
VIII. JACOB	53
IX. JOSEPH AND THE GOING DOWN INTO EGYPT . .	62
X. MOSES AND THE EXODUS	70
XI. MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS	80
XII. THE PENAL WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS .	89

29

LESSON I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Old Testament is a collection of separate books, bearing a variety of names, and written by a number of different persons at different times. At least one thousand years passed away between the writing of the earliest and that of the latest book. Abraham had no Bible at all, Joshua had only the five books of Moses, and when David was born the Psalms and the Proverbs had yet to be written. It was not till after the return from the Captivity, that the Jews at length possessed the Old Testament as we know it now. It was then collected, probably by Ezra, into one volume, which was known to the Jews under the title of "The Holy Scriptures."¹ For the sake also of convenience of reference, they were accustomed to classify the several books under three heads or divisions:—"the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms."²

The Jews regarded their Bible with the greatest reverence, as "the Oracles of God."³ They read it regularly in the synagogues, and its contents, as the many references in the New Testament plainly shew, were well known amongst all classes of the people.

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

² Luke xxiv. 44.

³ Rom. iii. 2.

Those who wrote the Old Testament spake, as St. Peter says, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ This gave to their writings an unity of purpose, so that there is a common thread running through them all. The promise made to Eve was that her "Seed should bruise the serpent's head."² How God prepared the way for the fulfilment of this promise is unfolded to us in the Old Testament. Its writings, from the first book to the last, "testify of Jesus Christ," and "speak of things concerning Him." They reveal to us beforehand His Person and Work, His Sufferings and His Glory.

The first five books of the Old Testament were written almost entirely by Moses, about fifteen centuries before Christ, and were given by him to the Israelites when he formed them, under God's direction, into a nation. These five books were originally but one book. They were divided afterwards into five, and the names by which we know these five divisions were given to them by the men who translated the Old Testament into Greek, in the third century before Christ. These men also gave to the whole work the name of "Pentateuch," or "The Book of five parts or volumes," which name we still use.

Moses wrote his book by God's command,³ and when completed, he delivered it to the care of the priests, who were to read it publicly before all the people once in seven years, and when there came to be a king, he was to have a copy to his special use, and "to read therein all the days of his life."⁴ It was to be placed beside the Ark, for a witness.

¹ 2 Peter i. 21.

³ Exod. xvii. 14.

² Gen. iii. 15.

⁴ Deut. xxxi. 9, 10, xvii. 18, 19.

In composing those parts of his book which tell of events of which he was not himself an eye-witness, Moses doubtless made use of earlier writings at that time in existence ;¹ and, in some cases, he probably had a direct revelation from God of what had happened before.

The five books include the history of the whole period from the creation to the death of Moses, immediately before the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land. Having given an account of the creation, they tell us of man's fall, and God's promise. Then, by the light of the New Testament, we are to see how the chief concern of Moses is to trace the course of the family, and afterwards of the nation, from whom the Messiah should spring. First, we have Abel, and when he is murdered, then Seth and his descendants down to Noah. Then, after Noah, the descent is traced through Shem to Abraham. In his person we have the direct ancestor of the Promised Seed according to the flesh. Hence the history becomes for a time more personal ; but the stream gradually widens again till it becomes the history of a mighty nation and people. Of surrounding families and nations we are told only so much as will serve to shew in what relation they stood to the chosen people, and when all connexion between them and the Israelites is at an end, they simply drop out of the narrative.

The characters of the persons brought before us by Moses, both of the good people and the bad, are full of instruction to us. In Abel, Noah and Abraham, in Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, in Moses himself, and in several

¹ These writings seem to have survived for a long time. Thus we find no record in the Pentateuch of the battle mentioned in 1 Chron. vii. 21.

others, we see what a noble thing faith in God is, and how it elevates and lifts up a man, and enables him to resist temptations, and to live as "seeing Him Who is invisible." In Cain, in Esau and in Balaam, as well as in others, sad examples are given us of how men may despise God's good gifts, and may even use them for bad and wicked purposes.

Moreover, in these books of Moses we have terrible instances of the power of sin and of evil passions to alienate men from God : and yet, on the other hand, we have the mercy and the love of God brought out in many ways—especially perhaps in His dealings with the children of Israel in the wilderness.

If we read carefully, we shall well understand how all these things happened as "ensamples unto us," and shall find these sacred pages full of life and instruction.

The purpose of this Manual is not to supersede the reading of the Sacred Scriptures themselves, but rather to be a kind of running commentary. Hence it is not intended to note every event recorded, but rather to draw out the general lesson of God's scheme of mercy in sending His dear Son into the world ; and, if it please God, to excite in the mind of the young reader a desire to read and study for himself.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things in Thy law."

LESSON II.

THE CREATION.

SPEAKING generally, we may say that the purpose of the Pentateuch is to reveal how God made man originally "very good," "in His own image"; and how, after man's fall, God entered into *covenant* with a chosen seed, promising, out of that chosen seed, to develop a scheme of redemption, whereby all the nations of the earth might be blessed.

But first, by way of preface to his work, Moses was inspired to reveal the all-important truth, that this Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was in very deed none other than the Creator of this universe.

Thus at the very outset Moses forbade and precluded the notion that God and Nature are two independent powers.

Without a deep underlying conviction of the identity of the Lord of Nature and the Lord of Grace no religion in the true sense of the word—no religion that shall sustain a man in the hour of death—is possible.

The first chapter of Genesis is an inspired certificate of that identity.

But besides this great purpose, Moses had in this opening chapter a subordinate purpose, specially

concerning his own people : to lift up the Hebrew people, degraded by long years of slavery, above the low and debased forms of worship which they had been accustomed to see practised by the Egyptians, and into which they had most probably fallen themselves.¹ They were to be made a nation of, and as a first step they must learn true thoughts about God. They had seen the Egyptians worshipping various animals, and paying reverence to rivers, hills, and trees—the nature in fact which surrounded them. But these things were not God, nature was not God, but God had made it and them; they were His servants, to do His will. This was the lesson that Moses was inspired to teach the Israelites;—all things existing for God's pleasure and depending upon Him.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In these few and very simple words, Moses teaches the Israelites the true source and origin of all things. Then he passes on to speak of the earth, and how it was prepared for the habitation of man.² "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Vast ages, thousands of years, elapsed, no doubt, between the time of the first verse and that of the second. What happened during that long space of time we cannot tell, nor does it concern us to know. Of this we may be sure, that during all that space there were angels and archangels praising and adoring God, and doing His will. At last God determined to fit the earth, which was "without form and void," for man's habitation.³ The

¹ "Moses, in the history of the creation, designed to lead the rude and carnal people of the Jews from things sensible and obvious to the invisible things of God." BP. BULL., *State of Man before the Fall*.

² Gen. i. 2.

³ Cf. Isa. xxxiv. 11.

second verse takes up the history at this point. All is darkness. But the work of God had begun. "The SPIRIT of GOD was moving upon the face of the waters." The word translated "moving" means fluttering or brooding like a bird over her young.¹ Then "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." That light had existed before, we may well believe, for "God dwelleth in the Light which no man can approach unto," and we know from the book of Job,² that stars existed long before the creation of the world. But no light had ever reached this earth; it lay enveloped in a thick impenetrable curtain of vapour. Then God spoke, and the veil was sufficiently thinned for the light to reach the earth; and God saw the light that it was good. The first great step in the work of preparation was accomplished; the evening and the morning were the first day. It was the first day³ of the Divine week of creation, corresponding therefore to the first day of the Christian week, on which a new light shone upon men's souls by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The vapours and mist which surrounded the earth have been partially dispersed. Light has been let in.

The next step, the work of the second day, is the separation of these mists and vapours from the actual waters of the ocean. This is expressed by the words "God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." The word translated fir-

¹ See Deut. xxxii. 11, where the same word is used.

² Job xxxviii. 7.

³ What the word *Day* may mean we cannot tell, possibly a long period of time: compare ii. 4, 17; John viii. 56; Rom. xiii. 12.

mament means really an expansion. It expresses the clearing of a great space between the clouds which gathered above and the ocean waters that gathered below. This firmament or expansion God called Heaven. By this is meant, not the heaven where God especially dwells, but rather the atmosphere surrounding the earth in which the clouds float and the birds fly. We talk of the birds and clouds of heaven. We may include too in our thought of the heaven that which we call the sky. To a child the sun, moon and stars appear to be set in the sky, and the whole to move round the earth ; but we know that really it is the earth that is moving. The ancient Hebrew did not know this, and Moses therefore describes it all to him in a way which he could understand, just as we still speak in the same manner of the sun rising and setting. In this firmament or expanse, then, the vapours and mists which before rested on the earth now floated as clouds. They are the waters which are above the firmament.

The next step in the preparation of the earth for the dwelling of man is the shrinking together into ocean-beds of the waters which were upon the earth.¹ Previously they seem to have covered the earth, but now the dry land appears. It is called by God EARTH, and the gathered waters are called SEAS.² As the earth, which existed before, but only now appears, dries, it brings forth at God's command the tender grass, the seed-bearing herb, and the fruit-yielding tree.³ This production of vegetable life concluded the work of the third day.

¹ Gen. i. 9.

² Psal. xxiv. 2, cxxxvi. 6 ; 2 Peter iii. 5.

³ Geology tells us that the sea teemed with zoophytes and shell-fish before land plants were created. This may well be ; but Moses speaks only of what would be visible to one permitted to see it all as *in a vision*.

On the fourth day a new scene opens. The sun for the first time breaks through the curtain of cloud, and the earth, green with vegetation, is warmed and heated by his rays. So at night-time the firmament glowed with the moon and the stars.¹ Now at length "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork."²

The earth is now fitted for animal life, and so on the fifth day the command goes forth—"Let the waters bring forth abundantly, the moving creature which hath life, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." In obedience to this command the waters teem with reptiles and the air is filled with winged creatures, insects and birds. The "whales" of ver. 21 is a mis-translation: the word really means "sea-monsters;" and may be applied also to such creatures as crocodiles.³ It was on this fifth day that God first blessed the work of His hands (ver. 22), and bid them "be fruitful and multiply." It was repeated and enlarged on the sixth day, when God blessed man.

The last day of the creation has now arrived. The light of the first day is supplemented by the sun, the moon and the stars of the fourth; the separation of the waters, and the making the firmament on the second day, is followed by the creation of fishes and birds on the fifth; the clothing of the earth with vegetation prepares it for beast and for man on the sixth. On this last day, the fair earth is filled with inhabitants; first, with what we call the brute creation, and then with man. The animals are divided into three classes:—the cattle, *i.e.* the grass-eating domestic

¹ Compare Dan. xii. 3; MILTON, *Par. Lost*, iv.

² Psa. xix. 1; Job xxxviii. 7.

³ As in Isa. li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3.

animals; the reptiles, such as lizards, worms, and the like, including also the smaller animals, such as mice, etc.; and the beast of prey, the fierce denizen of the forest. When all these have been created, the account of man's creation is given. It is introduced by God being represented as taking counsel with Himself as to man's formation. And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This is intended to shew us the dignity of man. He alone of all created things is made in the image of God, and capable of holding communion with God. To him alone is given an immortal soul; he alone possesses the power of choosing between the good and the evil, and therefore he alone is responsible for his actions. For this being, created thus pure and holy, an opportunity is to be given of more especial converse with God. God rested on the seventh day from all His work, which he had looked upon and pronounced to be very good. So in the human week as in the divine week a day of rest is given. From henceforth the day of rest was to be consecrated to God—an opportunity given to man to enter more consciously into God's presence, to meditate upon Him, and to contemplate Him in His glorious works.¹

¹ Mark ii. 27.

LESSON III.

ADAM AND THE FALL.

WITH the fourth verse of the second chapter Moses begins an account of the adaptation of a portion of the earth for man's special dwelling-place. Then he passes on to the sad history of the Fall, and the forfeiture of that beautiful abode. He, in very few words, sums up what has been already stated about the creation. But, in doing so, we cannot fail to see that he no longer speaks of "God" simply, but of the "Lord God" or "JEHOVAH ELOHIM,"¹ as the Hebrew words are. A great deal has been written and said about this change. We need only now remember that in chap. i. to ii. 3 Moses has been speaking of God in His relation to the universe at large, but now he is about to shew the special relation existing between Him and man. He therefore uses that name of God by which the Israelites, for whom he was writing, had learned to know God, and to believe in Him as One Who cared for them, and was full of loving-kindness and tender mercy.

From the dust of the ground the Lord God forms man, and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life,

¹ It should be borne in mind that wherever the word Lord is put in our English Bibles for Jehovah, it is always printed in capital letters, LORD.

gives him that which He had not given to the lower animals. The gift raised man above those over whom he was to have dominion, and made of him a responsible being, implanting within him that which we call his "spirit." For the dwelling-place of the man, the Lord God prepared a garden, bringing together perhaps into a smaller space those plants and vegetables fitted for man's food which were scattered over a large portion of the earth's surface. The position of this garden is said to be "eastward in Eden." There was a river which watered it, rising somewhere in Eden, but not in the garden, and then apparently, after flowing through the garden, parted into four heads, each of which had its own name. Every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food was planted in the garden, and in addition two special trees—the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What are we to learn from the mention of these two trees? They are described as both placed "in the midst of the garden," as if to shew that they were precious above all the other trees. What precisely we are intended to understand by "The Tree of Life" we cannot say; enough that it was to Adam a Sacrament of Eternal Life;¹—an outward visible sign by which God was pleased to convey to him His gift of Eternal Life. We may see in it a sign and prefigurement of the divine life which we Christians were hereafter to find in our Saviour Jesus Christ. To Adam, therefore, the taste of its fruit gave hope for the future. Long, long afterwards, it helped the wise King Solomon to a lesson. "Wisdom," he says, "is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her."² It reappears, too, in the

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *de Gen.* viii. 8.² Prov. iii. 18.

New Jerusalem (Rev. xxii. 2). It must have taught Adam that his life depended upon God, and not upon himself.

The other tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, was to be the test of man's obedience. There may have been in this tree a special virtue, by which, if its fruit were partaken of, a knowledge not before possessed would be gained. But others¹ suppose that the knowledge was not in the tree itself, or in its fruit, but in the trial to which man was put by its means. God said to Adam, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." As long as Adam obeyed this command of God, he would know nothing of evil. But the moment he broke it, he would understand that EVIL was really disobedience to God's will, and GOOD obedience to it.

Moreover, if he broke God's command, he was to die. Did he understand the meaning of this threatened punishment? He must have done so. The lower animals were already subject to death long before man was created. Adam therefore would understand that, if he disobeyed God, he would, instead of living on in a state of immortality, become subject to that same law which he saw imposed on the animals around him.

There were these two trees then planted together in the midst of the garden. The eating of the one would give life—the eating of the other death. It has ever since been thus. Good and evil, life and death, are always very near together. As Adam was free then, so are we free now to make our choice. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." It is a matter of obedience. To obey is life and liberty, to disobey is

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *de Gen.* viii. 12.

slavery and death. "I will walk at liberty, because I seek Thy commandments."¹ "Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin."²

Adam was thus placed in a position of trial and probation. In his state of holiness there would be no temptation to those sins to which we are continually being tempted. But, seeing himself superior to all the created things around him, Adam might be tempted to think that he could be independent of God. As a test therefore of his obedience, and to teach him that he had been created to do God's will, and not his own, he was commanded not to eat of the fruit of one of those two trees in the midst of the garden. How he broke this command we shall see presently.³

Meanwhile, in order to shew Adam that He had really given him power over the animals, God brings them to him to see what he would call them, and to train his faculties of speech and observation.

There was another step yet wanting to complete the

¹ Psa. cxix. 45.

² John viii. 34.

³ "There was a Covenant of Life," says Bishop Bull, "made with man in his state of innocence, and not only a law imposed upon him. . . . The prohibition given to Adam concerning the not eating of the tree of knowledge is ushered in with this express donation or grant of God, that he might freely eat of all the rest of the trees in Paradise, the tree of life not excepted. Now it is certain the tree of life was so called because it was either a sacrament and divine sign, or else a natural means of immortality: that is, because he that should have used it would (either by the natural virtue of the tree itself continually renew the decays of Nature, or else by the power of God) have lived for ever, as God Himself plainly assures us. So that the sense of this whole legislation to Adam is apparently this: 'If thou shalt obey My commandment in not eating of the tree of knowledge, thou mayest continue in Paradise, and freely enjoy all the other delights thereof, not being debarred from the tree of life itself, which thou mayest eat of, and live for ever: but if thou transgress this My commandment, in eating of the tree of knowledge, thou shalt certainly die.'" *State of Man before the Fall.*

whole tale of creation. When the lower animals were created, God had made them male and female, but He created man alone, by himself. "For Adam (the man) there was not found an help meet for him."¹ Yet it was not good for him to be alone. Therefore "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man."² The creation (or building) of woman from the side of man was totally unlike any other recorded act of creation. It seems that, after it was over, God revealed to Adam what He had done during the time of that deep sleep. Adam's observation, when the woman is brought unto him, shews this. "This is now bone of my bone," he says, "and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman" (Ishah), "because she was taken out of man" (Ish). Adam was thus taught the close relationship between man and woman, and received his first lesson in kindness, gentleness and love. The sacred tie of marriage began in Eden. The words which consecrated it then in those first days were afterwards adopted by our Blessed Lord, and used by Him to enforce His lesson—"What God hath joined together let not man put asunder."³

The man's happy condition at the first.—With the close of the second chapter a beautiful and happy impression is left on our minds. Nothing has yet happened to mar the "very good" which was pro-

¹ It is a very common mistake to use the two words "help" and "meet" as if they were one word, "help-meet." Meet means "fitted for." There is a confusion made between "help-meet" and "helpmate."

² Gen. ii. 21, 22; "made," lit. builded.

³ Gen. ii. 24; Matt. xix. 5; Mark x. 9.

nounced at the end of the sixth day. Earth is as yet the abode of innocence and purity. The man and his wife know no sin. Yet they are in a state of trial. If they pass through it without failing, there will be no painful transition, but a peaceful and joyful exchange of the life on this earth for a life in heaven; but if they fail, then pain and suffering must ensue; death, being a punishment, will be painful, for it will be the wages of sin.¹

An enemy at work.—How long the state of innocence lasted we are not told. There was an enemy at work. The Sacred Scriptures reveal to us an order of beings higher than man, of whom some fell through pride from their first estate of high purity and holiness.² These, because they delight in marring and spoiling God's beautiful work, become man's enemies, and their leader, Satan, or The Adversary, as his name implies, tries to compass man's fall. He could only have done this by God's sanction.³ But the command to Adam would have been no trial had there been no temptation to break it.

And, as in later times the evil spirits asked leave to enter into the swine, so now the Evil One entered into the glittering serpent, and seemed to speak by his mouth. Had he appeared to Eve in his own true nature, he knew she would have recoiled from him in horror. He chose the form of the serpent, because, as the Bible says, "he was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." The object of

¹ This is the view of most of the ancient Fathers of the Church, who clearly saw that man, possessing a body needing food for its support, would of necessity be liable to a change. Sin made that change painful.

² Jude 6; John viii. 44; 2 Pet. ii. 4; 1 John iii. 8; 1 Tim. iii. 6.

³ Job i. 12, ii. 6.

the Tempter was to stir in the woman's mind a feeling of discontent at the restriction placed upon them by God, and to awaken a desire for independence of God. He tried to make the woman fancy that it was out of jealousy that God had given the command. "God doth know," he said, "that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods" [or rather as God], "knowing good and evil." In yielding to the temptation, and eating of the fruit which was pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, the woman set an example that her children have been only too prone to follow. The temptation to explore good and evil is *the* temptation which besets youth. It is the desire to be independent of control, and to exercise one's own free will. The world is fresh ; there are many things which we know to be wrong, and from which we may have hitherto been kept and shielded. Then Satan tempts us. And as the woman fell, so do we. A thing looks good and pleasant. The echo comes from Paradise, "Ye shall not surely die;" the forbidden fruit is tasted. The knowledge is gained, but the price is dear.¹

The woman and her husband yield.—When the woman had tasted, and her husband also, to whom she gave of the fruit, "the eyes of them both were opened." The Tempter had spoken truly; there is always some truth in what he says. Their hearts were now oppressed with the sense of sin and guilt. They knew evil, but it was to find themselves its slaves. Their very bodies partook of the sense of shame which had come upon them. They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons. And

¹ James i. 14, 15.

why? Because they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the midst of the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid themselves, because they were naked, and were afraid. Thus sin always tries to hide itself before God.²

We must always understand, when we read in the Bible of God's Voice, of God's Hand, of His looking and reflecting upon what He has done, of His repenting, and the like, that this language is used because we have none other than these human words. God has not really a hand or an eye, for He is without body, parts or passions,³ but we are obliged to speak of Him as if He had, for only thus could we express our thoughts about Him. We are obliged to picture the Unseen by means of the Seen.

God's sentence on the act of disobedience.—Adam and his wife try in vain to hide themselves from God amidst the trees of the garden. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee,"³ said our Lord to Nathanael. So with our first parents. God saw them, though they fancied themselves concealed from His sight. And God said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" O terrible Voice! bringing sin home to the guilty, and making him confess to the act of disobedience. Adam's answer to the Lord God's question is just what we might expect from one still young in sin. He did what children and even others are so ready to do now, He threw the

² Compare St. Peter's conduct after his denial, John xxi. 7, and see Rev. vi. 16.

³ Article I.

³ John i. 48.

blame on another. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

And the woman, too, follows her husband's example. "The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

How true to the life! Our circumstances, our position, our friends;—we lay the blame upon anything rather than the real cause, our own misconduct.

Then comes the answer from God. And first to the Serpent. The curse upon him is twofold;—against the animal which has been made the vehicle of the temptation, and against the real doer of the mischief, the Tempter of mankind. We need not suppose that the serpent underwent any change of bodily shape, but that the sentence uttered against it signified its utter and perpetual degradation, and the loathing with which it should ever be regarded by man.¹ By the seed of the Serpent we must understand the evil spirits, the angels of the Devil, who are associated with him in the doing of evil.

But with the curse upon the Serpent comes the first note of comfort for the fallen man and woman. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."²

Then to the woman and the man the Lord God speaks. He does not curse them, but nevertheless the woman's sorrow and pain shall be greatly multiplied, and as for the man, it will only hereafter be by labour

¹ That the brute creation share in the sin of man we have many proofs in the Sacred Scriptures, *e.g.* the ox which gored a man was to be put to death (Exod. xxi. 28); the swine were drowned in the waters (Luke viii. 33); the fig-tree died (Mark xi. 20). See also Gen. ix. 5 and Rom. viii. 20-22.

² Gen. iii. 15.

and toil on his part that he will be able to obtain from the earth her fruits, and find bread to support his body. Everywhere and always there was to be henceforth a perpetual struggle against evil. In the end there shall be victory. The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head. This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, "made," as S. Paul says, "of a woman."¹ Thus, though deceived now and vanquished, Adam and his wife are encouraged by the mercy of God to look forward, though it be through much tribulation, to a period of restoration and triumph over their enemy. The Garden of Eden is however no longer a fit habitation for man. By eating of the tree of life man might procure for himself eternal life, which, under the altered condition of things, and until the curse had been done away in Jesus Christ, would be one of unhappiness and sorrow. The Lord God therefore, in pity, clothes Adam and Eve—who now first receives her name, which means "Life"—with skins, and then sends them forth from the garden to till the ground whence they had been taken. The entrance to the garden is guarded by the mysterious cherubim² and the flaming sword, emblems the one of mercy, the other of justice. By and by, in the far off ages, when all things are accomplished and the fulness of time has come, that earthly garden shall be replaced by a heavenly, and instead of being driven from it, "the glory and honour of all nations"³ shall be brought into it; and blessed shall they be who then "have right to the tree of life,"⁴ having done God's commandments.

¹ Gal. iv. 4.

² The root and meaning of this word are quite uncertain.

³ Rev. xxi. 26.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 14.

LESSON IV.

CAIN AND ABEL—NOAH AND THE DELUGE—BABEL AND THE DISPERSION.

WHEN Adam and Eve were driven from the garden, they do not seem to have wandered far,¹ but to have remained still in Eden. Here sons and daughters were born to them.² Three of these are selected for special mention, Cain, Abel and Seth. The reason of this is plain. As we go on we shall see how, throughout the Old Testament, there is always kept in view the thought of the Promised Seed Who should bruise the Serpent's head. The history is carefully traced, step by step, of the family and the nation through whom the Seed was to come. The thought of the promise was continually in the minds of the Patriarchs; it became the nation's creed; it reached its noblest expression in David and some of the Prophets, and then for a period it waned. Yet the thought never left the pious members of the Jewish nation. Their eyes were continually looking forward, and when at last the Seed came in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord, the aged Simeon exclaimed, as he took the Holy Child into his arms, "Lord, now lettest

¹ Compare Gen. iv. 16.

² Gen. v. 4.

Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen **THY SALVATION.**"¹

Side by side with this thought of the Promised Seed there seems to run, more or less constantly, another thought. It is 'that of the dominion which Satan obtained in the world. It is as if the sin, the violence and the corruption which pervaded the world were continually witnessing to the need for the Promised Seed, and the intense longing that the Seed should come. Hence we find the history of those persons given most fully, who either by their sin shewed forth the terrible power which Satan had acquired, and therefore the need of a Redeemer, or who by the circumstances of their birth, or by their holy lives, seemed to shadow forth, and even in some faint measure to realize, the idea of Him for Whom all were longing. We find these latter referred to in the New Testament as having thus prefigured or foreshadowed the true Redeemer. Hence we call them types (or patterns) of Jesus Christ, that is; in some particular or other they were like Him, though not in every respect. Thus Melchizedek as a priest is a type of our Blessed Lord; so Moses as a lawgiver and prophet, David as a king.

With this thought in our minds, we see at once that Cain, Abel and Seth are selected for mention from among the children of Adam and Eve, because Cain was the first great example, after the Fall, of Satan's power over man, Abel of faith and obedience and suffering for righteousness' sake, and Seth because he was the ancestor of that family and nation out of whom the Seed was to spring.

¹ Luke ii. 29, 30.

When Cain was born, Eve no doubt thought the Promised Seed was already come, for she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," and she called his name Cain, which means "gotten" or "acquired." As time passed on, however, she appears to have felt she was mistaken, for when a second son was born, she called him Abel, or "vanity," as if her hope were gone.

After an interval of probably more than one hundred years,¹ Cain and Abel met to offer unto the LORD of their substance. Abel offered his in faith,² Cain did not, and so the Lord had respect to Abel and his offering, but not to Cain and his offering.

The rejection of his offering awoke in Cain a feeling of jealousy towards his brother, and in a fit of uncontrollable anger he slew Abel. Convinced of his sin by God, he is driven from his home; and with a terrible curse from God upon him, he leaves Eden, travels eastward, and settles in the land of Nod.³ Here a son is born to him, and to commemorate his birth he founds a city, probably little more than a collection of mud huts, and calls it Enoch after his son.⁴

The dwelling of men in cities necessitates a variety of contrivances unknown to a wandering life. Accordingly, amongst Cain's descendants, we find in the invention of musical instruments and of metal working the signs of considerable progress in civilization.⁵ But there are signs too of license and violence. In the marriage of two wives by Lamech we find the first

¹ Gen. iv. 25 seems to imply that the murder of Abel took place very shortly before the birth of Seth.

² Gen. iv. 4, 5; Heb. xi. 4, 13.

³ The position of this is quite uncertain.

⁴ Gen. iv. 17; Ps. xlix. 11.

⁵ So perhaps we may in the names of their women :—Naamah = pleasant; Adah = beauty; Zillah = shadow.

tokens of the low estimate of women in eastern countries, and in Lamech's address to his wives is revealed a lawless and unhappy condition of society.

In the place of Abel, the righteous one,¹ who bore witness for God, and whose martyr-blood speaks still from the earth,² God gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth.³

One of Seth's descendants was Enoch, whose faith is spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It shewed itself in a holy life, and so God translated him, without dying, into heaven.⁴ The promise was bearing fruit.

At the birth of Noah, whose name means rest, we again have an indication that men were resting in the hope of the Promised Seed. There was something probably, of which we are not told, about Noah's birth which gave his father renewed courage in labouring and toiling upon the ground which "The LORD" had cursed. This son was destined, Lamech thought, to be the vanquisher of the enemy, and remover of the curse. At any rate we cannot help being struck by the contrast between the two Lamechs, Cain's descendant and Seth's. They probably lived about the same time. About the one there is the defiant tone of one who felt himself in the possession of wealth and power. Science and art were bringing round him their comforts: there is no note of toil or of suffering in his words. How different with the other! Nothing is said about any advance in knowledge or civilization. Living perhaps, as Abel must have done, a wandering nomadic life, he has, it may be, no settled home; har-

¹ Matt. xxiii. 35; Heb. xi. 4, xii. 24.

² Heb. xi. 4, xii. 24.

³ *i.e.* The one who is set, or put, in the place of another.

⁴ Heb. xi. 5.

vests perhaps have failed, scarcely with all his "work and toil of his hands" can he earn enough, it would seem, to live; every day brings to his remembrance the curse uttered in Eden; his life is one of sorrow, and yet full of faith. While his namesake is vaunting his strength and power of taking vengeance, resting in his own might, this Lamech takes refuge in God's promise—he looks to Him for comfort, and when his son is born, he is God's gift of consolation to him, and will give him rest.

Faith thus lingered amidst a world which was sinking into an irreclaimable state of wickedness. "It was corrupt before God, and filled with violence." Only one family of all the descendants of Adam still remained faithful to the true God. There was a general overthrow of morality. It came by degrees, not all at once. The first two verses of the sixth chapter carry us back to comparatively early days. Deeds of violence¹ produced their fruit. The sacred writer depicts a scene of degradation such as the earth has perhaps never seen since. At last the iniquity of men became full. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man, and it grieved Him at His heart." But even yet, before the Holy Spirit ceases to strive with men, there shall be an hundred and twenty years' longer probation. Nor is God left without a witness. Noah, Lamech's son, whose birth

¹ The words "They took them wives of all whom they chose" imply this. The word also rendered "giant" might be more forcibly translated "plunderers," "robbers." It only occurs here and in Numb. xiii. 33. It is quite a different word from those rendered "giant" in such passages as Deut. iii. 11; Josh. xv. 8; Psa. xix. 5 (Prayer Book version).

had been hailed with so much joy, became "a preacher of righteousness."¹ He, by his just and upright life, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Of him only, beside Enoch, is it said that he "walked with God." But his preaching was of no avail. "Men went on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,"² regardless of the warning which Noah by his faith in God gave them. Then came the terrible announcement: "The end of all flesh is come before Me, . . . behold I will destroy them from the earth."³ But Noah and his family are to be spared; the world is to be drowned, but they are to ride safely over the waters, shut up in the ark, which God now instructed him to build. The building of the ark must have taken a long time.⁴ During that time, Noah, as the Apostle says, "condemned the world"⁵ by the faith which he shewed in God's Word. The ark was built of gopher wood, a species of cypress, in the form of a huge chest, probably with a flat bottom and square ends. It was carefully smeared all over with pitch or bitumen, to keep it watertight. The description is obscure, but there seems to have been a kind of skylight window running along the roof of the ark, affording probably both light and ventilation. The interior was divided into three storeys or floors, and each floor was fitted with cabins, or nests, as the Hebrew word is.⁶

When Noah had stored all necessary food in the ark, and placed the various kinds of animals in it, according

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 5.

² Matt. xxiv. 38; Luke xvii. 26.

³ Gen. vi. 13.

⁴ Though probably not the whole of the 120 years.

⁵ Heb. xi. 7.

⁶ The ark was about 325 ft. long, 90 ft. wide, 55 ft. high. This would give a vessel not so large as the "Great Eastern," but larger than any of the ironclad men-of-war.

to God's instruction, he and his family entered it, and "the LORD shut him in."¹ Then there was a pause for seven days. There is something very striking in that week's interval, as if God were even now unwilling to destroy the ungodly inhabitants of the earth. The week was at last over, and then "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up," and the windows² of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered.³ Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." Such is the simple, grand language of the sacred writer. It produces upon us as we read it the sense of profound and utter desolation—nothing to be seen but a wild waste of waters. As far as eye could reach no mountain or hill is visible. There is no cry of human beings, of beasts, or of bird. There is only that one solitary vessel floating on the water.

¹ Gen. vii. 16.

² That is, the sea broke over the land by a subsidence or depression of the latter.

³ Lit. "flood-gates," descriptive of the torrents of rain.

⁴ All round to the horizon. All mankind were drowned; but mankind may not have yet spread over any large portion of the earth; perhaps not beyond the great plain of the Tigris and Euphrates. Compare Deut. ii. 25.

Yet its inmates were not forgotten. God remembered Noah, and all that were with him in the ark.¹ After forty days and nights of ceaseless rain, the land, which must have been sinking, began to rise to its old level. One hundred and ten days are required for evaporation, accelerated by a wind, which God made to pass over the earth, to lessen the depth sufficiently for the ark to take the ground. It seems to have drifted into the country of Ararat or Armenia,² grounding on one of the ranges of hills probably which run through the country. After two more months, the tops of other hills are seen, and then, after a further interval of two months, the dove sent forth by Noah finds rest for the sole of her foot, and Noah removes the covering of the ark. At last, on the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the new year, Noah received God's permission to "go forth of the ark." It was a joyful procession which then streamed out from the vessel of refuge, to take possession of the cleansed and chastened earth. Once more is heard the voice of the Lord God blessing His creation, and telling them to be fruitful and multiply. Noah, with a heart full of gratitude, builds an altar, and acting upon some law with regard to clean and unclean beasts and birds of which we are ignorant, offers of the former burnt-offerings on the altar. "And the LORD smelled," such is the simple language of early history, "a savour of rest, and said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart

¹ Gen. viii. 1.

² Armenia and Ararat are different names for the same country. Compare Gen. viii. 4 with 2 Kings xix. 37 and Isa. xxxvii. 38, where the Hebrew for Armenia is Ararat. Jerome says it was the name of a region, not a mountain.

is evil from his youth." Henceforth there was to be mercy. Man's redemption should be brought about by other means than prevailing waters. For all time, the sun should rise on the evil and on the good; the rain should fall on the just and the unjust; fruitful seasons, succeeding one another, should fill men's hearts with food and gladness.¹ For all time, too, Noah would be the type of righteousness triumphing over sin. Abel typified the Promised Seed by his suffering, but Noah typifies it by his being the instrument of redemption achieved after suffering, whereby the family of man was saved from utter destruction. Moreover, in Noah's accepted sacrifice we see foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice; in the ark we see portrayed not merely the fact of safety in Jesus Christ, but the manner of it. It is a picture of His Church, all the members of which share in the triumph of their Lord, Who—as Noah from the flood, which was the death of the rest of the world,—returned in safety from the grave, rising again from the dead.² And once more, as Noah became the second head of the human family, and a kind of second Adam, and entered into a new covenant with God, so Jesus Christ is the true Second Adam, the real spiritual Head of mankind, through whom, in their baptism, they enter into a new covenant, and become heirs of the promise of restoration to eternal life made dimly and mysteriously to Eve.

God's covenant with Noah is remarkable for the reason which is given for awarding death as the punishment of murder—"In the image of God made he man." This implies that, though by man's fall the

¹ Matt. v. 45; Acts xiv. 17.

² 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

image of God in him was marred, it yet was not wholly obliterated.

The sign and token of the truth and reality of the covenant was to be the rainbow, an instance (like the sanctification of water and of bread and wine in the Christian Sacraments) of God taking what is well-known and common, and raising it into the sign of some high spiritual truth.

With the account of how Noah became a husbandman, and the indication, in his blessing of Shem and Japheth and his curse upon Canaan,¹ of the future destinies of his sons' descendants, the history of the great Patriarch closes.

¹ The blessing of Shem points to his descendants preserving the worship of Jehovah; that of Japheth to wide dominion, and the acceptance in after days of Shem's faith. Both these, as well as the curse upon Canaan, have been very clearly fulfilled.

LESSON V.

MANKIND AFTER THE FLOOD— ABRAHAM.

NOAH lived for 350 years after the Flood, and long before his death his descendants had made their way gradually year after year in a south-easterly direction,¹ until at last they reached the well-watered and fertile plain of Shinar, lying between the great Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and known in after centuries as the land of the Chaldees and Babylonians.

It is not long before the spirit of disobedience again shews itself. Forgetful of God's command to replenish the earth, men plan a tower "whose top should reach to Heaven," hoping it might serve in that flat country as a landmark, and as a kind of magnet, to keep them from wandering far away from one another. The narrative seems, too, to indicate still prouder thoughts. If allowed to go on, "nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do."² So God confounds their language, that they cannot understand one another. And they left off to build the city, which

¹ Gen. xi. 2, where "from the east" should be "eastward," as in the margin.

² Gen. xi. 6.

in memory of the event is called Babel, or "confusion"; and "from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

This history of the dispersion of mankind is very important, because it gives us the account from the Divine side of that wonderful variety of language which prevails in the world, and which may yet be traced, as the latest researches of science tell us, to one source and one primeval tongue. It is perhaps still more important as the first assertion, since God's covenant with Noah, of His moral government over the world. He overrules the mistakes and sins of men to the working out of His own great purposes. This does not make man's sin the less, but it makes God's Providence the more wonderful. As a secondary thing, too, the dispersion of mankind shews us the value of such a list of names as that which is given us in the tenth chapter. Were it not for that list we should be greatly at a loss to know in what directions men were scattered from Babel, and what parts of the earth the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth respectively peopled.

With the dispersion came the necessity for more distinctness with regard to the Promised Seed. The thought of it had never died out. In the worst of times there had always been an Enoch, a Lamech, or a Noah to bear witness for God, and to "confess that they were pilgrims and strangers seeking a country, even an heavenly." But now, with varieties of language, and consequent difficulties of intercourse, there would be a danger of the promise fading away altogether from men's minds. Accordingly, the dim prophecy of Noah, in his blessing of Shem, of the line of the Messiah, is about to receive further development, so that in the

person of Abraham the actual ancestor of the Promised Seed is clearly announced, and the nature of His work distinctly indicated. Slowly and by degrees the veil hanging over the future is lifted, until at last, on the Crucifixion Day, we see the work of the Promised Seed accomplished, and Redemption wrought for man.

Sketch of Abraham's Life.

Abram¹ (as his name was at first) was the youngest of a family consisting of a father and three sons, who lived at Ur of the Chaldees, a city situated, as St. Stephen tells us, in Mesopotamia,² and probably in the lower part of that country which borders on the Persian Gulf. In the general decay of the worship of the true God, in which a portion at any rate of Abram's family shared,³ God singled out Abram, separated him from the idolatrous influences of his early home, and bade him go to a land which He would shew him. Terah, Abram's father, sharing in the desire of his son to emigrate, took all his family with him, except his eldest son Haran, who was already dead, and Nahor, who seems to have stayed behind; and leaving Ur, followed, for the sake of food and pasturage, the course of the Euphrates upwards, until he reached a spot called Haran or Charran, situated in the upland country, in the midst of beautiful hills and fruitful valleys. Here

¹ High or mighty Father.

² The ruins of Mugheir are believed to mark the site. So Canon Rawlinson in *Dict. of Bible*. Dean Stanley, following ancient tradition, identifies it with Orfa or Edessa, on the higher waters of the Euphrates. *Jew. Ch.* i. 6.

³ Josh. xxiv. 2.

Terah died, and Nahor, Abram's remaining brother, who by this time had probably joined¹ the other members of his family at Haran, made it his home. With his father's death the tie which bound Abram to Haran was broken, and, probably within a very short interval, he, accompanied by his nephew Lot, the son of the dead Haran, set forth, with his wife Sarai, and a large concourse of slaves, of camels, asses and sheep, the *substance* of an oriental emir or sheikh, such as Abram was, to fulfil the command of God. Crossing the Euphrates, he must have travelled along the country bordering on the mountains of Lebanon, and passing near Damascus, even then a city, he probably entered Canaan by way of the river Jabbok. "Passing through" the land, he pitched his tent under the ilex or evergreen oak-tree of Moreh, in the place afterwards called Sichem, or Shechem, said to be the most beautiful spot in all Palestine. Abraham² was now treading the soil of that country to which God had called him, and which was to be the inheritance of his descendants. Yet he himself was to be always a sojourner and a stranger in it. At Moreh or Sichem, God a second time speaks to Abraham, promising him the land where he now is, and he, to commemorate the place of the promise, builds an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. This was the first of four places—Moreh, a hill between Bethel and Hai, Mamre or Hebron, and Beersheba—which were rendered sacred by the altars which Abraham built there (or, as in the

¹ See page 33.

² God changed Abram's name to Abraham ("father of a multitude") after he had been in Palestine nearly quarter of a century, and when He announced distinctly to him that Sarah should have a son. Gen. xvii.

last case, by planting a tree or grove of trees), and by his calling there upon the name of Jehovah. The remainder of Abraham's life, nearly one hundred years, was spent almost entirely within the bounds of his adopted country. Once, being driven by famine, he paid a visit to Egypt, even at that early time a well-governed and civilized country. Here he was betrayed, as afterwards in Gerar, in the part of the Promised Land inhabited by the Philistines, into an act of deception. It may be that the fear of a powerful and despotic monarch like the Pharaoh of Egypt broke down for the moment his faith and trust in God. Abraham's life in Palestine was what is called a nomadic one, a life, that is, with no settled dwelling-place, but a passing from one spot to another, as the Arabs do at this day. Abraham removed from one altar-place to another, "walking through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it," receiving at intervals communications from God, growing outwardly in riches, wealth, and honour, inwardly in the graces of faith and obedience. Living long enough to see his grandsons Jacob and Esau on the verge of manhood, he at last died "in a good old age, an old man, and full of years." He was buried in the cave of Machpelah, beside Sarah, and there his sepulchre is to this day.

Abraham as a Friend and Neighbour.

The main interest of the story of Abraham's life centres in his intercourse with God. We shall consider this in our next lesson. Meanwhile there are some two or three incidents related of him which enable us to picture him to ourselves in his relation to

other men, and to form an idea of his character in its social aspect.

The first of these incidents occurred after Abraham's return from Egypt. His possessions and those of Lot had so increased during their sojourn there, that when they returned to Canaan "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together." The consequence of this was that a strife arose "between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle." But Abram would not allow any ill-feeling to grow up between himself and his nephew. He would rather give way. "And Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren." He proposed to Lot that he should choose that part of the country which he might prefer to dwell in, and as for himself that which Lot refused he would take. They were now on that hill near Bethel, where Abram had on his first visit built an altar to God, and which has been clearly identified of late years.^{*} From this hill a beautiful view is obtained of the rich valley of the Jordan and the northern end of the Dead Sea. Lot is fascinated by the sight; he "beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt," and in an evil hour for himself he selfishly chose that soft country, where the luxurious and wicked Sodomites were then dwelling. Lot journeys accordingly eastward, leaving to Abram the hilly land of Canaan, less fruitful, but safer for body and soul. By his noble and self-denying conduct Abram puts an

^{*} See a paper read at the Dublin Church Congress by Rev. George Williams.

end to the strife, and reads us all a lesson upon the blessedness of the peacemaker. And Lot, too, he reads us a lesson, but it is upon the baseness of selfishness. He gained nothing by his choice, and in the end became the hero of a sad and melancholy story.

Take another illustration. Abram had just returned from the pursuit of Chedorlaomer and his allies. They had conquered the Sodomites, and taken Lot captive. All Abram's feelings of kinship, so strong in an Eastern, had been roused by hearing of Lot's misfortune. Arming three hundred and eighteen servants, he had started in pursuit of the marauders, overtaken them, fought and defeated them. Lot was rescued and the spoil recovered. The incident shews what a powerful chieftain Abram was ; and yet his success might have elated him and made him proud. But no. Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of God the Most High, meets him with bread and wine, and Abram, ready to acknowledge that God has given him the victory, gives to God's priest a tithe of all the spoil. What a beautiful incident is this ! It brings out the humility of God's servant, and yet the respect with which others regard him. The figure of Melchizedek too stands forth, in its unknown descent and history, vividly on the face of the Bible narrative, as a type of Jesus Christ the Great High Priest, receiving the homage and adoration of His disciples.

We pass over many years, some thirty perhaps, and find Abraham standing up amidst an assembly of the people of the land, the Children of Heth, and bowing down himself before them. It is a sad occasion. Sarah, the companion of his long wanderings and the mother of Isaac, is dead. The stranger. Abraham the

Hebrew, her husband, has nowhere to bury her. Though he has wandered so long in the country not an inch of it can he call his own. The people meet him courteously, and are ready to grant his request. Not one of them but is willing to allow to Abraham the use of his sepulchre in which to bury his dead. But that is not what Abraham wants. He, to whom the land has been promised by God, will not mingle with the native population, so as to become one of them—not even in death. He must have a place of his own. But see how gently, yet firmly, he declines the well-intentioned kindness. He would like to purchase the cave of Machpelah, at its full worth, for a burying-place. He entreats the people to make interest for him with the owner. Ephron the Hittite will not be outdone in politeness. He will give the field—"in the presence of the sons of my people, give I it thee." He is ready nevertheless to take money for it, and Abraham knows it. Yet he makes it a favour for Ephron to allow him to purchase. Eventually the purchase is made, and there, in a tomb believed to be still preserved, and still to have in its keeping her dust, and that of her husband, Sarah is buried. The story rebukes in us all rudeness and discourtesy. Abraham becomes to us, nineteen centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ, the type of Christian gentleness and Christian firmness.

LESSON VI.

ABRAHAM—*continued.*

Abraham as the Servant of God.

ABRAHAM stands out before us on the Bible page as the man of faith—the faithful man—the friend of God. To him, on eight or nine occasions, God revealed Himself, and step by step led him on to see in the promise of all nations being blessed in him an assurance that from him should spring the Promised Seed, longed for by Eve, hoped for by Lamech.

When God first spoke to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, He said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee : and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing : and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And Abram "went out, not knowing whither he went."¹ This was the first decisive step in Abram's life. He felt a call from God, he knew not whither it might lead him, but he did not hesitate to obey it. It was, as

¹ Heb. xi. 8.

St. Paul would say, "a door of faith" which God held open for him, and he went through it. In the lives of us all, perhaps in the time of our youth, God opens to us doors of faith. The whole future of our lives depends, it may be, upon our decision then. If by our own act we shut the door, we cannot tell whether God will ever open it again.

The promise which God at the first made to Abram was threefold : there was the promise of a country ; of a great posterity ; and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.

After Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, the first part of the promise was renewed ;—"Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abram now knew that he had at last reached his journey's end. Yet through all his life he was never to possess any portion of it, except a cave at Machpelah as a burying-place. As years passed by the exercise of his faith must have been greater. To strengthen that faith, after Abram and Lot had separated, God, renewing the second part of the promise, said—"All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Yet Abram had no child. He was getting on in years, and could only look forward to his steward or chief slave being his heir ;—"Lo ! one," he says, "born in my house is mine heir." To encourage him, God comes to him again for the fourth time, and in vision, and bids him not be afraid. "I am thy shield," He says, "and thy exceeding great reward." Evidently, from Abram's reply, there was a shade of doubt coming over him ; the time seemed passing rapidly away, and as yet he had no seed. Could it be that "this Eliezer of Damascus" is the intended seed, that in him God's

promise is to be fulfilled? But the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "This shall not be thine heir." Surely a son shall be born to him, and if he can number the stars of heaven, then too shall he be able to number his descendants. "And Abraham believed the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." God's promise is solemnly ratified. Between the double row of slain beasts and birds there passes at night-time a burning lamp; the sign that God had made a covenant with Abram.

Still the promise made at Ur is as yet only partially renewed; and though there is to be a seed, and Abram believes it, there is nothing as yet said about the mother of the seed. Abram, it is apparent, had no thought that his wife Sarai would be the mother. The birth of Ishmael shews us how Abram believed God, and yet was mistaken altogether as to the manner in which the covenant would be fulfilled. How gradually God trains His servants! Step by step He leads them on, drawing out their love and their faith.

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me."

The affections of his father were entwined around the lad Ishmael, as he grew up towards manhood. For thirteen years Abram lived on, regarding Ishmael as the promised seed, in whom God's covenant would be fulfilled. It was a terrible shock to him when told at last by God that he was mistaken. "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee," is his prayer. It is the rudest trial his faith has yet undergone. That Sarah, his aged wife, should become a mother now seems to him impossible. When he hears it, he laughs, perhaps

with joy, but it would seem with incredulity. God reiterates what He has spoken, and declares that the name of the child of promise shall be Isaac (*i.e.* he laughs), in memory no doubt of this day. Then again Abraham's² faith rises once more. His unbelief is but momentary; the covenant of circumcision is established. Two parts of that first threefold promise are now renewed. The line of the Promised Seed is indicated. He must be the son of the free, not of the bond, woman.

Soon after this, Abraham was one day sitting at his tent door, in the heat of the day. Three travellers suddenly presented themselves to him, and when he saw them, he ran, with that Eastern politeness so conspicuously shewn in all he did, to meet them, and begged them to rest awhile, till he should have prepared some refreshment for them. Who were these strangers, and what their errand? Two of them were on their way, as we learn from the next chapter, to fulfil God's judgments upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, and to rescue Lot and his family from the impending ruin. The third stranger is believed to have been our Blessed LORD Himself. In this interview we may venture to believe that He, Who afterwards appeared as the very Promised Seed Himself, appeared now unto Abraham, and renewed the assurance that Sarah should have a son. But the interview is remarkable on another account. For the first time for some five and twenty or thirty years at least, the last part of the threefold promise is mentioned again. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely

² His name is now changed. Gen. xvii.

become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" Thus the promise has once again grown to its first proportions. First the land, then the seed to inherit the land, then that the seed should be the free born son of promise, and now at last that in that seed all mankind should be blessed.

Abraham's faith is fast ripening to maturity. God knows of him that he will train his children and household to keep the ways of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment. Yes, *we* are his children, and he is still training us. For his high example still speaks to the youth or the maiden of these Christian days, when first setting foot on the pathway of labour and of active life. Be noble, be pure, be true, Abraham seems to say to them. As I looked forward, so do you look back, to the Promised Seed, and as I was a pilgrim in the land of Canaan, so remember that you too are pilgrims,—through all the trials and temptations awaiting you, ever looking for the City whose Builder and Maker is God.

Treating Abraham as His friend, God reveals to him His purpose of destroying the wicked Sodomites. Abraham appears to us as a mediator. He pleads for those wretched cities. If there are fifty, thirty, ten righteous there, will God indeed destroy the cities? And He said, I will not do it for ten's sake. But ten could not be found. Lot and his two daughters are rescued, while Sodom is destroyed.

Several years now pass by. The son of promise, in whom the father's love now centres, has grown to be a man, or at least a lad. Abraham is reposing upon God in fullest faith and confidence. There seems nothing

for him now but to calmly look forward to quickly passing days, lengthening years, and yet an eventide of life of special grace and beauty. But his faith has still to undergo the keenest trial. The son whom he so dearly loves, and who was so exclusively the heir of God's promises that He is called Abraham's only son, is to be offered up as a burnt-offering to God. The faith of the aged patriarch stands the trial. He is sure that *somehow* God will fulfil the promise that hung on Isaac, though he sees not how. Early in the morning, accompanied by Isaac and some attendants, he makes his way to the land of Moriah, to the place where afterwards stood Solomon's Temple.¹ The altar is built, the wood laid, the lad bound, the knife outstretched. But suddenly the father's hand is stayed by the voice of the Angel of the Lord. All God asked has been in reality done. For Abraham's will was to do God's will. "By faith," says the Apostle, "Abraham offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." The promise was now renewed in all its fulness. "In blessing, I will bless thee";—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." Thus Abraham's life of faith and trust has been crowned with Jehovah's highest approval. In his life of willing obedience he is a type of our Blessed Lord. Abraham looked forward—saw Christ in the far off distance of time, and by the sacrifice of Isaac learned dimly how *even so* by suffering and sacrifice the redemption of the world was to be accomplished.

¹ There seems no sufficient reason for departing from the ancient tradition on this point.

LESSON VII.

ISAAC.

THE life of Isaac presents a great contrast to that of Abraham. While this latter was full of incident, frequent travel, and broken by eight or nine communications from God, Isaac's life was passed chiefly in one spot, from which he never seems to have wandered more than two or three days' journey. The want of incident coincides well with his calm placid character, which led him to run away from difficulties rather than to face them. Instead moreover of eight or nine, only two communications of God are recorded as having been made to Isaac.

Isaac was born in the Negeb or South Country,¹ which, with a width of some fifty or sixty miles, borders the southern portion of the Holy Land, stretching from the Dead Sea and the Valley of Arabah on the east to the Mediterranean on the west. Though now left nearly uncultivated, it is full of the remains of ancient cultivation. Terraced hill-sides, remains of gardens, orchards and vineyards, wells, some still full of water, others blocked up with rubbish, and ruins of towns and fortresses, all tell of a long past time when this land

¹ Gen. xx. 1.

might have been described as one flowing with milk and honey, full of oil-olives and vineyards. In this pleasant country, near to the southern extremity, and close to Beer-lahai-roi, Abraham and Sarah were when their only son was born, the son of promise, in whom Abraham saw the ancestor of the Promised Seed.

Great was the rejoicing when Isaac was weaned. But there was one terrible alloy to Abraham's pleasure. The old jealousy between Sarah and Hagar was aroused by Ishmael's conduct. Sarah saw him mocking at the rejoicings, and at once required Abraham to "cast out this bondwoman and her son : for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Hard as was Sarah's request, and contrary to all the fatherly feelings of Abraham's heart, the thing came "of the Lord." So Hagar and her son are cast out, to wander where they may.

Meanwhile the intention of God is fulfilled. Isaac, as the promised son, is kept separate. There must be no question in after years as to Abraham's successor. In Isaac shall his seed be called. St. Paul brings out the spiritual meaning of this history in his Epistle to the Galatians. Ishmael represented the Law, Isaac the Gospel ; the two cannot exist together : the older, which represented the keeping men in bondage, must give way to the younger, the representative of the freer air and the more noble and pure life of the Gospel.

We hear nothing more of Isaac for several years. In the interval his father appears to have moved a little farther north to Beersheba, and he is there when the call came to him to offer up Isaac, his only son, a burnt-offering unto the Lord. Ignorant of his father's intention, Isaac accompanies him, and it is not till they

have arrived at the appointed mountain that he becomes aware that he is the lamb to be offered. The type of One Who coming after him should be greater than he, Isaac submitted himself to the will of his father, and of God. Silently he lays himself on the altar, and allows his father to bind him. No such act of self-surrender is recorded until that of Him Who gave His life a ransom for many. If by his high act of faith Abraham was able to rejoice in the sight of Christ's day, surely Isaac too did not go unrewarded. He also must have learned some high truths about God, and of his own typical character, the thought of which sustained and supported him through his long life, especially that last dreary half-century nearly,—when, blind, feeble, and latterly a widower, he spent a lonely and apparently uncomforted old age.

Some fifteen years or so elapse, and we have another circumstance in Isaac's life recorded. In perhaps the most charming and beautiful picture of ancient Oriental life and manners of which we have any record, we are told of Abraham's extreme care and anxiety to provide his son a wife from amongst his own people. The son of promise, and the heir of the promises, must not intermarry with the daughter of any of the heathens around. In the most solemn manner Abraham charges his trusty servant, Eliezer of Damascus probably, to go to Haran, to his brother's family, and fetch a wife hence for Isaac his son. The Lord would be certain to direct him and make his journey prosperous. In no case, and under no circumstances, must he take Isaac himself to Haran. The servant, taking with him ten of his master's camels, and gifts of jewels for the future bride of Isaac, makes his way to Haran, the

city of Nahor. His first act was to pray to his master's God, and to ask that he may know the damsel by a sign. She is not to be forward in offering water for himself and his camels—nor is she simply to comply with his request. Modestly, yet courteously, and with a true Eastern hospitality, she is to offer more than he asks. If such an one he should meet, she must be the appointed wife of Isaac. It was evening-tide. The maidens are coming out of the city to draw water. Amongst them comes one, fairer than the rest it may be, to whom the servant proffers his request for water. She fulfils the sign. She draws water for the camels as well as for the man. He presents her with jewels—bracelets for her hands, and a jewel for the nose or forehead, and inquires her name. Upon hearing that she is one of Abraham's family, he thanks God for having so prospered his journey. Rebekah runs to her mother's house and tells the great news. Laban, her brother, whose cupidity is excited by the sight of the jewels, welcomes the traveller. Refusing all offers of refreshment, the servant at once tells his errand; Laban and his father acknowledge the matter to be of the Lord; Rebekah consents to go to be Isaac's wife; and on the morrow the homeward journey is at once commenced. In the whole transaction which shall we most admire—the faith of Abraham in God, or the faithfulness and single-eyed service of his servant?

One evening Isaac, still sorrowing for his mother, who has now been dead some three years, is praying in the fields at eventide. He has come from Beer-lahai-roi, his favourite dwelling-place. Presently he lifts his eyes, and sees camels coming, which he evidently recognizes as those of his father. Rebekah

in her turn has lighted down from her camel, and on learning who the man is who is coming to meet them, has assumed the long veil of Eastern women. The two meet. They learn to love one another as husband and wife. Rebekah is taken by Isaac into Sarah's tent, and he is comforted after his mother's death.

Another interval of twenty years brings us to the birth of Esau and Jacob. Even before their birth, the Lord told Rebekah that the elder should serve the younger. The line of the Promised Seed was to be kept clear and distinct. The open, careless and good-natured Esau might be more of a favourite amongst men than the cunning and worldly-wise Jacob, but God saw in the latter a capacity for faith which was not in his elder brother. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

After a while there came a famine such as had been some eighty or one hundred years before in his father's time. Intending to take refuge in Egypt, Isaac broke up his camp at Beer-lahai-roi, and entered the territory of Abimelech,¹ king of Gerar. Here, for the first time since the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Isaac heard the voice of God. He is not to go down into Egypt. Perhaps if he had gone down his gentle and quiet nature would have led him to adopt the settled life of that country, and induced him to stay. For this the time had not yet come. So he sojourned in Abimelech's country.

Here, in the incident of the wells, Isaac's gentleness was again conspicuous. Driven from one place, he

¹ Probably the son or grandson of the Abimelech in Abraham's time. Abimelech seems to have been a title of these Philistine sovereigns, just as Pharaoh was among the Egyptians.

withdrew to another, and again to a third. At last he was left unmolested, and he called the new spot Rehoboth, or "spaces."

Isaac after this went up to Beersheba, and there, for the second time, the LORD appeared to him, and encouraged him. He built an altar and worshipped the LORD. The ill-will of Abimelech and his servants still followed him. They were in truth afraid of him, and desired a covenant of peace with him, which after some remonstrance he granted. The very same day, his servants, digging a well, perhaps the very one which Abraham had dug, and which had become filled up, found water, and so for the second time the place received the name of Beersheba, the "Well of the Oath."

Only one more incident is recorded of Isaac's life. Though he had still nearly half a century to live, being now about one hundred and thirty-seven¹ years old, "his eyes were dim, that he could not see." He called his eldest son Esau, the man fond of the hunter's life, and desired him to obtain for him some savoury meat, the product of the hunting-field. Now, some time before this, Esau had grieved his father and mother by marrying two Canaanitish women. Still Esau was the favourite son of his father. The gentle nature of Isaac leaned with confidence on the stronger nature of his son. Isaac thought that his death was fast approaching. He must bless his son before he died, that is, he must give him the special blessing of the first-born. Did Isaac think to bestow this unknown to Rebekah, who, mindful of that prophecy before the birth of her sons, would

¹ Or, as some think, and as really seems more probable, 117 years old. This would make Jacob's sojourn in Padan-aram forty years instead of twenty. See *The Speaker's Commentary*.

have desired the blessing for Jacob, her favourite son? We cannot tell. Or had he a consciousness that in proposing to give to Esau the blessing appertaining to his birthright he was fighting against the will of God? We cannot tell. But certain it is, that when Jacob had obtained the blessing, and Esau's return revealed to his father the true position of affairs, Isaac trembled exceedingly. He saw God's Hand in it. He could no longer resist the Divine ordering. He was obliged to admit to Esau that he had blessed Jacob with the blessing intended for him—"yea," he added, "he shall be blessed."

Afraid of the effects of Esau's wrath, Rebekah, with that bold spirit of intrigue which seems to have been so strong in her, contrived to accomplish her purpose of sending Jacob away by rousing Isaac's fears lest his younger son should marry a Canaanitish woman, even as Esau had done. His father, who now fully recognized Jacob as the inheritor of the promises, dismissed him with his best blessing:—"God Almighty bless thee, . . . that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger."

The history of Isaac's life now closes. Except that he lived to see Jacob's return from Padan-aram, we know no more of him. His two sons met to lay him in the tomb beside Abraham and Sarah.

The chief glory and beauty of Isaac's character is its gentleness. He never quarrels. Strife is hateful to him. There is not about him the grandeur of Abraham nor the cleverness of Jacob. But in his submissiveness, in his love and veneration for his father, and his readiness to suffer wrong, he is not an unworthy type of the great Promised Seed, "Who, when

He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."¹ In Isaac the idea of sacrifice advanced a clear step forward. The Promised Seed must be a Sacrifice; and as Isaac willingly submitted to be bound, so must the Seed willingly offer Himself as a Sacrifice for the whole world.

Moreover, as Abraham saw God exercise the principle of selection in choosing the son of the free woman before the son of the bond woman, so Isaac saw that principle extended. Of two sons equally free born, God chose the younger, and made him the heir of the promises. This was necessary in order to preserve the line of the Seed. But its earlier consequences did not at once become evident. There was nothing in Abraham's circumstances to lead him to narrow the circle of the blessing wherewith God had blessed him. Nor yet in Isaac's. Somewhat there may have been in Jacob's. But as the necessity arose more and more to isolate the chosen family or nation, there grew up, insensibly perhaps, the feeling of exclusion. Hence, side by side with the great thought of a Redeemer of the world, the benefits of Whose Sacrifice and Intercession should be reaped by all mankind, there arose up the other thought of a chosen people, separated from other nations, and enjoying, to the exclusion of all others, the blessing of God's favour and countenance. This feeling grew in intensity, until Jesus Christ came, Who broke down the middle wall of partition, and, fulfilling the prophetic promise made to Abraham, proclaimed to all, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, the glad tidings of God's love and mercy.

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

LESSON VIII.

JACOB.

JACOB'S life very naturally divides itself into three periods: (1) the period spent at home with his father and mother; (2) that spent at Haran with his uncle Laban; (3) the remainder passed in the Promised Land, and in Egypt.

(1.) *The First Period.*

The key to Jacob's conduct during his home life, and indeed during the whole of his career, is to be found in the revelation made to his mother before the birth of himself and his brother:—"The elder shall serve the younger." Rebekah certainly pondered long and often upon those words, and watched anxiously the growing dispositions of her two sons. Her affections centred on the quiet Jacob, while Isaac, drawn towards one who was strong where he himself was weak, loved Esau, the brave and adventurous hunter. Upon Isaac's mind the prophecy of God made a much less deep impression we may well believe than upon Rebekah's. She felt that Jacob was the heir of the Promise, and communicated her feeling to him. It was not clear how the prophecy was to be fulfilled, but both Rebekah and Jacob believed

in it. They were ready to seize any opening which might seem to accelerate its fulfilment. Hence that eager reply of Jacob to Esau, when, faint and weary from the hunt, he asked his brother for some of that red lentil which Jacob was sodding into pottage;—"Sell me this day thy birthright." Hence too the anxiety of Rebekah to secure at what she supposed to be the hands of the dying Isaac the blessing of the first-born for Jacob. We dislike instinctively the shrewd bargaining of Jacob, and we loathe the lie and the deceit which he and his mother practised upon the aged and blind Isaac; yet we seem to see at the same time, in what they did, the failings and the sins, not of absolutely wicked persons, but rather of those who, believing in God, are unwilling to wait His time for the fulfilment of His promises.

On the other hand, in Esau is seen the careless, indifferent man, who does not value religious privileges and blessings when they are apparently of no use to him, but when the need for them is felt only too eagerly clutches at them. Esau despised his birthright for a mess of pottage; but when he was expecting to receive the first-born's blessing from his father, then the value of the birthright was seen. Reaping in real truth that which he had sown, he was angry because of his failure, and threatened, in his passionate unrepentant way, "to slay his brother Jacob." Yet we feel a pang of sorrow for him as we hear him, with a great and exceeding bitter cry, say, "Bless me, even me also, O my father."

Nor must we forget that though Jacob obtained the birthright and the blessing, he learned by bitter experience in his after life that the lie which he acted and

spoke brought its own punishment. Those years of deceit which he endured at the hands of Laban, and those other years of sorrow for the cruelty, lawlessness, and disobedience of his own sons, must have brought home to him his sin. Not thus, nor by such bypaths, were God's high purposes to be fulfilled.

(2.) *Jacob at Haran.*

According to the usually received chronology, Jacob appears to have been seventy-seven years of age when he obtained the first-born's blessing, but if, as seems not unlikely, his sojourn in Haran extended over forty, and not as is commonly supposed over twenty years only, he was only fifty-seven. His going to Haran followed closely upon the deceit practised upon Isaac. Though sent there ostensibly by his father to seek a wife amongst his own kindred, his journey was really a flight from the anger of Esau.

Very lonely and very sorrowful must Jacob have felt as the sun set upon the first night of his journey. His father, it is true, had bestowed upon him the richest blessing, and the now confirmed belief that he was the one chosen by God to be Abraham's representative, must have given him confidence. Yet the way was all untried before him. The consciousness of sin must surely too have oppressed him. That night perhaps was the crisis of his life. In the middle of it, as he slept upon his pillow of stones, the mountains around him with their terraced sides became in his dream a staircase¹ reaching from earth to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending this wondrous

¹ A better rendering than "ladder," as in our Authorized Version.

staircase ; and at its top stood One Who announced Himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham, and of Isaac. He blessed Jacob with the blessing given before to his father and his grandfather, and added—"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." Jacob awoke from his sleep. "How dreadful," he exclaimed, "is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven." A stone set up as a pillar, and oil poured upon the stone, marked Jacob's sense of the spot being holy ground. He called the place Bethel,¹ or the House of God. He vowed to worship JEHOVAH, and to pay to Him a tenth of all his possessions.

Yet Jacob was far from being perfected. Even in this high moment of promise and blessing, he seems almost, as it were, to make a bargain with God ;—"If I come here again in peace, then shall the LORD be my God."

Nevertheless Jacob's ideas, whatever they may have been, about the birthright blessing for which he had striven so sinfully, must have been lifted up from earth to heaven. To have the blessing of the first-born meant to be the chosen and favoured one of God ; it meant not temporal blessings only, but that higher spiritual blessing of being the ancestor of the true Seed, in Whom all nations should be blessed. That Seed should be the true Staircase upon which man might ascend to God, the true way from earth to Heaven. The dream at Bethel could never have been effaced from his memory, though other thoughts, cares and affections may oftentimes have made it dim and misty in the ever-lengthening time.

¹ A name transferred afterwards to the neighbouring city of Luz.

At Haran Jacob prospered. He had indeed a crafty and avaricious man with whom to deal, in his uncle Laban ; but his very necessities brought out all Jacob's powers of thought and observation, and he made use of them in his dealings with Laban. The increase of Jacob's wealth excited the jealousy of his cousins, Laban's sons, so that at last his servitude became intolerable. Having secured the co-operation of his wives, Leah and Rachel, he determined upon a secret flight. Crossing the Euphrates, he set his face toward Mount Gilead, and travelling with all the speed possible,—accompanied as he was by young children, and numerous flocks and herds,—he reached Gilead, the land immediately east of Jordan. Here he was overtaken by Laban, who, being warned of God, was afraid to injure his nephew. But an angry altercation ensued about some images or teraphim which Laban said had been stolen from him. Jacob was indignant, Laban mean. Restrained however by varying motives, they agreed to a covenant. The spot where they stood receives its double name of Galeed and Jegar-sahadutha,¹ "the heap of witness," in memory of the event, and as a token that they would neither of them pass that boundary to the injury of the other.

Thus the second period of Jacob's life closed. He and Laban never met again. During this time Jacob is seen as a man of deep but quiet feelings ; willing to be open and honest, but ready to exercise his natural cunning and foresight should occasion require them. Amidst great difficulties, he pursues his way

¹ "Galeed" being Hebrew, "Jegar-sahadutha" Aramaic, both meaning the same. These two names are a proof of how soon language becomes diversified when communication ceases.

steadily, keeping the end in view. From a solitary wanderer he has become a great chieftain, with his wives, and his children, his men-servants and maid-servants ; his camels, and asses and cattle. Little or nothing is said as to his progress in faith. Yet surely so thoughtful and earnest a man must have made some advance in that long course of years. That it was so is evident, because at last the time came when God saw that the discipline through which he had gone had prepared him for a recall to the Promised Land.

(3.) *Jacob in Canaan and Egypt.*

Laban gone, Jacob pursued his way, and pitched his tents not far from Jordan, close to the fords of Jabbok. Here God granted to him "a vision of angels." The hosts of God were encamped on either side of him. Whatever might happen, he might rest assured that they who were on his side were more than they who were against him. He needed all the support and strength such a vision could give him. Once more he was in the power of Esau his brother. His brother's anger, his own sin,—all the past must have risen vividly before him when he heard that Esau was coming with 400 men. He took all possible precautions, and then threw himself upon God's protection. Very humble, very conscience-stricken were his words ;—"O God of my father Abraham, and of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant." He determined to "lodge that night in the company." But no, he must be alone. In the dead of

the night he rose up, and sent his wives and sons across the river. "Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." It is the second crisis of Jacob's life. What does it mean? He has been in banishment some twenty or forty years—years perhaps of secret repentance. He is about to meet Esau again. His old sin is brought to remembrance. Will he quail before his brother? Will he resort again to miserable deceits and base subterfuges? He is about to tread again the soil of the Promised Land. Will he tread it nobly as God's servant, or ignobly as the servant of sin? It is a time of intense spiritual conflict. God wrestles as a man with His servant. And though made to feel his weakness, for by a touch of the mysterious Hand Jacob's thigh is put out of joint, yet Jacob prevails—he will not let the Man go except He will bless him. And what is the blessing? It is this. His name is changed. It *was* "Jacob" the supplanter, the hard bargainer with his brother, the deceiver of his father; it shall now be "Israel," a prince of God. "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him."¹

The interview of the brothers was affectionate. And then they parted, to meet apparently only once more, at the grave of their father Isaac. Esau retired to Seir or Edom, leaving Jacob free to enter the Promised Land.

Jacob spent some thirty-three years in the land of Canaan. They were years probably for the most part of trial. Ten or twelve of them were spent near the city of

¹ Hosea xii. 3, 4.

Shechem,¹ where he purchased land, built an altar to El-Elohe-Israel,² and sowing corn, began to assume the habits of a settled life. A rude and terrible incident forced him to travel southward, under God's protection, to Bethel, where God had answered him in the day of his distress. At Bethel, Deborah, his mother's nurse, who had come perhaps on an errand from his father, died. There is something very tender and touching in this mention of an old servant. The name of Israel was confirmed at Bethel, and then he moved again southward. Another deep sorrow awaited him. His beloved Rachel died at Bethlehem. But her little child lived. His father will not despond. Sorrow shall not quench his faith, nay, it shall add to it. The child shall not be Benoni, but Benjamin—not the son of sorrow, but the son of the right hand, of strength, that is, and power. Travelling on, Jacob came to Mamre, in time once more to see his aged father Isaac before he died.

And now Jacob himself was becoming an old man. Sorrow and trial were still to go with him. His sons were fierce and cruel. They inherited moreover some of their father's deceit. His dear son Joseph, as he approached manhood, was taken from him; there seemed scarcely anything left for him but to lie down and die. Thus did the penalty of his early sins cleave to him almost to the end. But there was a brighter side. Israel learned deep lessons in spiritual life. He "observed" all these dispensations of God. At last the cloud of sorrow was lifted. Joseph was restored to

¹ Our English Version says Jacob travelled "to Shalem." It would seem better to translate Shalem "in peace," and so bring Jacob to the place where Shechem was then living.

² That is, "God, the God of Israel."

him. God encouraged him. He went down to Egypt full of faith and hope. There, after seventeen years, he died. His last days were bright and peaceful. His years may have been "few and evil," but yet "his blessings had prevailed above the blessings of his progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Gathering his sons around him, he gave to each his last blessing. In words, coming from a heart full of loving, even if sorrowful, memories of the past, he charged them to bury him beside Abraham and Isaac, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. He looked forward into the far distant future, and saw, even as Abraham had done, the day of Christ. Thus chastened and purified by sorrow and suffering, Israel died, a shock of corn fully ripe.

LESSON IX.

JOSEPH AND THE GOING DOWN INTO EGYPT.

UNTIL the time of Joseph the history of the family from whom was to spring the Seed promised to Eve is the story of the life of some one man, who was a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ according to the flesh ; —of such men as Noah or Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. But the history becomes with Joseph that of a family, and soon of a nation. The leading character of the time or history is no longer an ancestor necessarily of the Promised Seed, but simply a member of the family or nation. Such is Joseph, and such in after days were Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Saul.

Joseph, the eldest, and for some years the only son of Rachel, was born at Haran, about six years before his father's return to the land of Canaan, and when Jacob was about ninety-one years old. In after years he would just remember perhaps his father's flight from Laban, and Jacob's care to place himself and his mother last in the cavalcade as they stood waiting the dreaded approach of Esau.

As Joseph grew up, his father's love was centred upon him, as the son of his old age. Jacob made him a striped coat or garment of bright colours, possibly

as indicating a wish to give him as the eldest son of Rachel the birthright of the family.

Joseph is now seventeen ; a bright handsome youth, full of promise of future excellence. Already there is a marked difference between himself and his half-brethren. He is with them, but he mingles not in their rude and evil ways. For Jacob's elder sons were apparently very different from their father or grandfather. Cruel and licentious, they seem to have made themselves hated by the Canaanites. Joseph brought their evil report to his father, whose marked preference for him aroused the jealousy of his brethren. "They hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Upon the first opportunity which presented itself, they, heedless of his soul's anguish, sold him to a company of Midianite merchantmen on their way to Egypt, with the "spicery and balm and myrrh" so much in request amongst the Egyptians for the embalming of the dead. By these men Joseph was carried into Egypt, to the busy and populous city of On, the centre of the worship of the sun-god Ra, and was sold to Potiphar, captain of the executioners, or, as we should say, superintendent or inspector of prisons. Here Joseph quickly won the confidence of his master, so that "he made him overseer of his house," and Joseph became "a prosperous man." The secret of his success was an habitual sense of God's presence. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" he asks, when tempted to sin. The victim of a false accusation, Joseph was cast into prison, though it would seem that Potiphar did not altogether believe him to be guilty.¹ Very soon Joseph became the trusted deputy of the keeper of

¹ Compare Gen. xl. 4.

the prison, but more than two years elapsed before he was released. Deliverance came at last. The king dreamt two dreams, which no one could interpret. At last his chief butler remembered how Joseph interpreted a dream of his so successfully two years before. The young man was at once sent for; and a solution asked from him of Pharaoh's dreams. He gave it, but assured the king that the real interpreter was God. The dreams meant the same thing :—Seven years of extraordinary plenty, and seven of very grievous famine. As now, so then, Egypt depended for its fertility upon the overflowing of the Nile, and this again is contingent upon the amount of rainfall in the mountainous regions of Abyssinia and Central Africa. If there should be a drought in those upper countries, there would be famine in Egypt. So it was in Joseph's time.

Joseph suggested to Pharaoh that preparation should be made for those terrible famine years. Pharaoh, struck by his wisdom, and grateful to him, appointed Joseph, with the applause of all his officers, commissioner to carry out the plans he had suggested. By a sudden leap Joseph was raised from a prison dungeon to being lord over all the land of Egypt.¹ But his elevation did not spoil him. He was still God's servant, carrying about with him the conviction that it was not for Egypt's sake alone that he was thus placed in a position of so much power.

The seven years of plenty passed by. The store-houses of every city were full of corn. Joseph had personally inspected all the preparations, and now the seven years of dearth began to come. The people, who had made little or no provision for the famine,

¹ Compare Psa. cv. 20-22.

cried to Pharaoh for bread. "Go to Joseph," he said ; "what he saith to you do."

Joseph's great powers of statesmanship now displayed themselves. The Pharaoh who was reigning was one of the Shepherd kings,¹ not a native prince, and very probably the people were disaffected towards him, and would have gladly thrown off their allegiance. But Joseph seized, with very remarkable power, the opportunity to consolidate the rule of his benefactor. At first the Egyptians had plenty of money, which was in the form of heavy golden and silver rings, with which to buy the corn. After a time the money became exhausted, and then Joseph introduced barter ; the cattle were exchanged for bread. This arrangement lasted for a year, and then the people had nothing but their bodies and their land to sell for bread. Joseph bought them for Pharaoh, and to facilitate the distribution of corn gathered the scattered population closer around the store cities. Both land and people, except the priests and their lands, were now the property of the king. But Joseph, with the forethought of a great statesman, saw that this was too hard a condition to last. He voluntarily relaxed the bargain. Instead of being serfs, the people were to hold their land of the crown as its tenants, paying a fifth part of the produce to Pharaoh by way of rent or land-tax. The allegiance of the people was thus secured. "Thou hast saved our lives," they said, "let us find grace in the eyes of my Lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

Joseph's administration did not confine itself simply to the internal affairs of the nation. The merchants

¹ The shorter period (215 years) assigned in this Manual to the sojourn in Egypt would bring Joseph's Pharaoh within the *Shepherd* dynasty.

of Canaan and other neighbouring countries, where the famine was felt as sorely as in Egypt, came to Egypt to buy corn. Joseph, appreciating the very great importance of maintaining the trade of the country, willingly supplied them with bread stuffs in exchange for money and goods. By this means the life and energy of the Egyptian people and their influence in foreign affairs were sustained. It is believed also that the system of irrigation by means of small canals ramifying all over the country, and fed by the Nile, was introduced under Joseph's administration.

In every way therefore Joseph shewed himself a wise and prudent state-minister. The beneficence of his rule was long remembered. For nearly 150 years it maintained its hold upon the mind of the Egyptian people. But it served a higher purpose still. It was the means used by God to work out His great purposes in regard to the Promised Seed. It was easy for a Shepherd king to advance one in his kingdom who had been a shepherd lad, and had sprung from a shepherd race. The keeping open the communications with other countries made it possible for Joseph's brethren to come as traders and buyers of corn into Egypt; and the sympathies of a king of alien race, who felt that he could not trust too implicitly to the good faith of the native population, would be the more readily given to a race of like occupation with his own ancestors. Joseph seems well to have understood this, and to have traced in it all the hand of God.

Among the foreign traders whose purchases of corn Joseph himself superintended, there came one day, in the first year of the famine, ten men from the land of Canaan. Though, disguised as he was by his growth

from seventeen to thirty-seven, and by his Egyptian dress and manners, these men did not recognize Joseph, he at once knew them to be his own brethren. During all those twenty years his thoughts had been with his old home, and his father, and his brother Benjamin. Would he ever see them again? Did his father know the truth about him? Was Benjamin also an object of hatred as he himself had been?

Why had he made no effort, we might ask, to see his father, during the seven years that he had been governor over Egypt? The distance was not so great but that he might easily have made a journey into Canaan. Surely the reason was that he felt he was in the hands of God, and had learned from his father, as the lesson of his life-long experience, to wait God's time. Now at last that time seemed to have come.

His brethren stood before him. And yet some Divine impulse stayed him from making himself known unto them. They must be proved, whether they were repentant, and trustworthy intelligence must be gained of his father and Benjamin. Now for the first time he learnt that his father had regarded him from the first as dead. His questions, without exciting their suspicions, awakened their consciences. They connected their present distress with their grievous sin;—"We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Retaining Simeon as a hostage, Joseph allowed them to depart, upon the strict condition that the next time they came Benjamin was to be with them.

The year went round. Food again was wanted, and with great difficulty Judah persuaded his father to let Benjamin go. We know how it all ended; how Joseph tried his brethren yet once and again; how Judah made

a noble speech, betokening surely a repentant heart ; and how at last Joseph, unable to refrain any longer, exclaimed : " I am Joseph ; doth my father yet live ? " He bade his brethren see God's directing hand in all that had happened, even in their own cruel conduct towards himself.

Nothing now remained but to bring Israel his father into Egypt. Pharaoh, pleased at the thought, afforded every facility, and placed Goshen, the best and most fertile part of Egypt, at Joseph's disposal, for his father, and brethren, with their wives and children, their numerous attendants, and their great flocks and herds. On the way a solemn halt was made at Beersheba, while Israel offered sacrifice, for the last time, unto his father's God, in the land where his father had dwelt. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and he said—" I am God, the God of thy father : fear not to go down into Egypt ; for I will there make of thee a great nation : I will go down with thee into Egypt ; and I will also surely bring thee up again."

Thus the chosen family came into the land which was in after years to be unto them a house of bondage and a home of severe affliction. But for the present all was bright and joyous. Joseph went up in his chariot to meet Israel his father, and Israel, in words which were strangely like the words of another when he greeted the Child Jesus,¹ said, " Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." The sorrow of many years is over, and he whom " the Word of the Lord has tried "² knows now, and his brethren know too, the meaning of those early dreams, and those years of captivity, of banishment and imprisonment.

¹ Luke ii. 29, 30.

² Psa. cv. 19.

And as, seventeen years afterwards, the sons of Jacob gathered round his bed, and listened to his last words of blessing, Joseph felt how still his father's heart loved him, as he heard of the blessings which shall rest on "the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brethren." His own faith too it may be was strengthened as his father spoke of the God who had fed him all his life long—of the Angel which had redeemed him—of the land of their fathers to which God would certainly bring them again.

With scarcely a failure, scarcely a word or deed recorded of him which can be called into question, Joseph stands out on the sacred page as the example of a pure and upright and God-fearing man. Fitted evidently by nature to have power and to rule, he exercised the power, when he had it, righteously and justly. In all his relations he never forgot that he was God's servant, sent into the world to work out God's purposes, even though it were at the cost of suffering to himself.

LESSON X.

MOSES AND THE EXODUS.

OF the 430 years which were to elapse between Abraham's first visit to Egypt and the going out therefrom of the children of Israel, about half had expired when Jacob removed from Canaan with all his family and possessions, and settled in Goshen, the fruitful north-east corner of the land of Egypt. Reckoning all the slaves and dependants who must have come with Jacob, there cannot have been less than 1000 souls, all of whom would be counted as Hebrews. These "grew and multiplied exceedingly," so that, doubling themselves in every twenty years, they numbered at least 2,000,000 at the time of the Exodus. Such a total population is implied by the 600,000 fighting men of Numbers i. 46.

As long as the same family or dynasty ruled in Egypt the Hebrews were protected, and prospered exceedingly. But about 135 years after Jacob's entry, a new king arose which knew not Joseph. The Shepherd kings were in fact deposed, and a native Egyptian dynasty ruled instead. The new king, sharing the prejudices of his fellow-countrymen against a shepherd race, and jealous of the increasing power and numbers

of the Israelites,¹ determined to oppress them, and if possible check their increase.

The king thus unconsciously worked out the designs of God. Some rumour of God's prophecy to Abraham seems to have reached him, for he was evidently afraid lest they "should get them up out of the land." The country could not afford the loss of so numerous and hard-working a body of people, but at the same time he thought they must not be allowed to become too powerful. Probably, if left to themselves, the people would never have been induced to leave the comforts of Egypt. But they soon sighed by reason of the bondage, and longed for deliverance. Pharaoh's plans thus had exactly the contrary effect to that which he desired. His last order too, for the destruction of all the boy-children, worked for the furtherance of the Divine purposes. To it the Israelites owed it, that when the time came, God had a man ready, who by his education, talents and high position was fitted to be the instrument of the nation's deliverance.

This man was Moses, the son of a Levite named Amram, and Jochebed his wife. Born just after the issue of the fatal decree for the destruction of the infant sons, and being "exceeding fair," his mother, in the hope of preserving his life, set him afloat when three months old in the river Nile, in a little vessel of bulrushes, smeared with pitch to make it water-tight. Pharaoh's daughter rescued the little child, and engaged as nurse, without knowing it, his own mother. Thus two points necessary to his future life were pro-

¹ As the Psalmist says, "He made them stronger than their enemies." Psa. cv. 24.

vided for. As the adopted son of the princess, he was brought up in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians; and as the nursling of his own mother, he probably learned from her of the history of his people, and of its hopes of deliverance.

Moses seems to have been kept from all direct intercourse with his people, so that it was not till "he was full forty years old that it came into his heart to visit his brethren."¹ He had probably no particular object in his visit, but when he beheld their bondage and misery, he seems to have felt at once that God had called him to deliver them.² With a high consciousness of the destiny of his people, and rejecting the grand career of an Egyptian statesman which was before him, he chose, as the Apostle says, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."³ But his brethren did not as yet recognize him as their deliverer, and so, when he tried to relieve them from evil treatment, and to appease a quarrel, they resented his interference.⁴

Moses saw no safety but in flight. For the next forty years he was a stranger in the land of the Midianites, an Abrahamic people,⁵ dwelling around the shores of the eastern, or Elanitic, gulf of the Red Sea.

Those forty years were to Moses a time of seclusion and separation, of preparation for his great work. At last they were at an end; and then there reached him the loud and distinct call out of the burning bush—"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that

¹ Acts vii. 23.

² Acts vii. 25.

³ Heb. xi. 25, 26.

⁴ Acts vii. 24, 26-28.

⁵ Gen. xxv. 2.

thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”¹

Doubts and difficulties crowd up before Moses, his insignificance, his want of eloquence, the very ignorance of himself and his people. But God overrules all these:—“Certainly I will be with thee, Aaron shall be thy spokesman. Say unto the people, I AM hath sent me unto you.” And for credentials, to induce the people to believe in his mission, there is that rod in his hand, which shall become a serpent or a rod at his pleasure; there is his own hand, which shall be leprous or clean as he chooses; there is the river Nile, which shall be blood or water according as he shall order it.

Thus encouraged, Moses left the desert and the sheep of Jethro, and having been joined by Aaron, set forth on his great mission. The people received him gladly—they rejoiced in the thought of deliverance, and believed in the Lord.

Not so Pharaoh. “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.”

The immediate result was an increase in the oppression and cruelty practised on the people—they were perplexed,² Moses discouraged—“Thou hast not delivered Thy people at all;”—some of his old difficulties started up afresh.³

God encouraged him again, and reminded him that He had made known to him the meaning of the sacred name “JEHOVAH,” the purport of which was not known to their forefathers.

Yet obviously more must be done to convince Pharaoh. Three months had probably elapsed since

¹ Exod. iii. 10.

² Exod. v. 21.

³ Exod. vi. 12.

the first call, and now for the next nine, it may be, there followed in rapid succession signs and wonders, and nine terrible plagues. Moses gained each day in strength and confidence, and became very great in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh, softening for a moment when the plagues were upon him, hardened his heart more than ever, as each was removed. At last the order was given, "Let every man demand of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold."¹ They were no longer to be slaves—they were going out with a high hand. But still Pharaoh retained his grasp. One last plague, more grievous than any, must be inflicted;—the first-born must be slain. To mark that night for ever, the beginning of the year was changed, and the feast of the Passover was instituted. The flesh of the slain lamb was to be eaten in haste, each man of Israel ready prepared for the journey, and the blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled on their lintels and door-posts, that the destroying angel might pass over their houses. "It is a night much to be observed," for it not only perpetuated the remembrance of Israel's deliverance, but it prefigured the great Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, by Whose death there is deliverance from the bondage of sin. "Christ our passover," says St. Paul, "is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast."²

The preparations for safety and for flight were made, and then at midnight there arose a great cry and wail of sorrow. The first-born were dying; the invisible hand of God's angel was slaying them. Pharaoh and

¹ It is better to translate the word thus, than by the "borrow" of our Authorized Version, which conveys a wrong idea.

² 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

his servants were at last conquered. "Go," said the king, "serve the LORD as ye have said." "And the Egyptians were urgent upon them, for they said, We be all dead men." With kneading-trough on shoulder and dough unleavened, the vast host, with a mixed multitude of other and probably kindred nations, went up out of Egypt, journeying from Rameses, the capital city of Goshen, to Succoth. From Succoth, the straight road to the Promised Land lay in a northeasterly direction, not far from the Mediterranean Sea, and through the Philistine territory. In a very few days they could, by this route, have been in Palestine. But they could not be trusted. Enfeebled by slavery, they would have turned back to Egypt as soon as they saw signs of opposition. So, in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, the great Jehovah guided them by the way of the Red Sea.

From Succoth to Etham in the edge of the wilderness was the next stage, and then the command was "turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon." The news¹ was carried to Pharaoh that the route was changed. Then he understood, what probably he all along suspected, that the people, instead of going for a three days' festival to Jehovah, and returning, intended to flee altogether out of Egypt. To follow with his 600 chariots and his horsemen was his instant resolve. He overtook them, as they were encamped by the shore of the Red Sea, somewhere near the modern town of Suez, past which the sea at that time appears to have flowed as far as the Bitter Lakes. Now they were within his power once more. The sea in front, the mountains to the south and the rear, and

¹ Exod. xiv. 5.

the Egyptian army to the rear and the north ;—every way was blocked ; escape seemed impossible. Well might the slave-bred Israelites cry out with fear. But Moses reassured them, and the cloudy pillar moved from the van to the rear, “ being cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, a light all night to the Israelites.” In the morning there was a dry passage for them across the bed of the sea. The strong east wind acting upon the ebb spring-tide had lowered the waters ;—the sea on their right and the lagoons and the marshes on their left formed walls of defence on either hand.

Pharaoh could only attack in the rear. He pursued after them into the midst of the sea, and then the returning tide, first softening the sand so that it was as if the Lord troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, flowed in upon them and overwhelmed them. To a man they were drowned, and “ Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore, and they believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

Can we wonder that when they saw the great deliverance thus wrought, both leader and people “ sang His praise,”¹ Who had thus avenged them on their enemies? Noble indeed is that first outburst of Hebrew poetry with which they celebrated the overthrow of their enemies. Grand prelude is it to those centuries of prophetic and Messianic song to which the Kings and Prophets and Mothers of Israel gave utterance. The men sang,

“ Jehovah is a man of war,
Jehovah is His Name.”

And the women, with timbrels and with dances, led

¹ Psa. cvi. 12.

on by "Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron," answered them :—

"Sing ye to Jehovah, for He hath triumphed gloriously.
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

The passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea was, as St. Paul tells us, a baptism,¹ because it was the separation for them from the bondage and idolatry of Egypt, and the commencement to them of a new life, the national life of freemen, bound to one another by the common bond of belief in one Jehovah, Who from henceforth should be their God and they His people.

Hence, in the Christian Church, this passage of the Israelites has ever been regarded as prefiguring the "mystical washing away of sin" in Holy Baptism, when he who is baptized "is regenerate, and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church."

From the shore of the Red Sea the Israelites "went out into the wilderness of Shur," or "the Wall," so called because the chief feature of this part of the desert is the high mountain wall or escarpment which bounds it on the north and east. For three days they journeyed in this wilderness, and found no water; and when they did find it, it was so brackish or bitter, from the natron or carbonate of soda with which the soil is impregnated, that they could not drink it. These Marah waters were miraculously "healed," and a lesson of trustful obedience inculcated. The march was next to Elim, and thence once more to the sea coast, and so to the wilderness of Sin, where for the first time, six weeks after their leaving Egypt, we have notice of a

¹ 1 Cor. x. 2.

deficiency of bread. This was miraculously supplied with manna and quails. The manna was continued to them by a daily supply all through their desert wanderings, until they ate the corn of Canaan. It prefigured, as our Blessed Lord teaches us, His own coming down as the Bread of Life from Heaven,¹ and the spiritual sustenance which Christians find in the Supper of the Lord.²

After two more halts at Dophkah and Alush,³ places which cannot be identified, the Israelites pitched in Rephidim, a place of perhaps doubtful identification. Either from real lack of water, or because, as is more probable, they were barred from access to the wells by the powerful Amalekite tribe, God, in answer to the people's murmurings, gave them a miraculous supply of water from the rock. The rock smitten by Moses, which gave life to the Israelites dying from thirst, became the type of Jesus Christ, the true Rock, from Whom he that believeth, drawing of the Living Water, shall never thirst.

It was at Rephidim that the Israelites gained their first victory over the Amalekites, and here it was too that Moses, acting under the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law, who had brought to him his wife and his two sons, took the first step in giving the nation political life.

The next halting-place was the wilderness of Sinai itself, memorable for ever from what was now about to take place there. The camp was pitched in the wide plain of Er Rahah, upon which several valleys converge, and, "rising like a huge altar in front of the

¹ John vi. 49-51.

² 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

³ Numb. xxxiii. 12, 14.

congregation,"¹ was the mountain range of Sinai, with its foremost peak of Ras Susafeh, the veritable seat of the giving of the law, with its sheer precipitous sides, a mount indeed "which might be touched,"² but to touch which was death.³ Three days were given to the purifying and sanctifying the people, and then, on the third day, in the midst of "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud," "Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai ;" "and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." With such terrors was ushered in the giving of the law ; and in this way the people were taught that God would make them His own "peculiar treasure," and that they should be "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." With this terrible sight, and with Moses as the Mediator of the Covenant now to be made, the Apostle contrasts the Mount Sion of the Christian, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,⁴ and St. Peter regards the history of the Exodus and the giving of the law as typical of the Christian believers, who are, he says, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."⁵

¹ DEAN STANLEY, *Sinai and Palestine.*

² Heb. xii. 18.

³ Exod. xix. 12.

⁴ Heb. xii. 22, 24.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

LESSON XI.

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE wilderness of Mount Sinai, in which we left the Israelites encamped in our last lesson, is a wide open plain of some considerable extent, surrounded on all sides by granite mountains, intersected by a number of fertile valleys, through many of which streams of clear water run. It was capable at the time of the Exodus of supporting a much larger population than at present. There are remains still of ancient cultivation, which, though gradually disappearing for the want of any kind of care, testify to the industry and hard work of former times. The halt of the children of Israel in this wilderness lasted for nearly a year. Its purpose was to afford time for giving them laws and a constitution, and so to raise them from a nation of slaves to one of freemen.

Soon after their arrival at Sinai, God revealed Himself to the people, and gave to them the Ten Commandments. But the mighty thunderings and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet "exceeding loud," so awed them that "they intreated the word

should not be spoken to them any more" directly¹ but through Moses, to whose report of God's commands they promised obedience. To him and to Aaron, who alone was permitted to accompany him, the first group of laws (Exod. xx. 22—xxiii.) was given, and then the covenant between God and the Israelites was solemnly ratified. The erected altar, the offered sacrifice, the blood sprinkled both on book and people, the words of the book read in the audience of the people, and their answer, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient;"—all these went to the dedication of that first covenant, which was the shadow and the type of the New Covenant which in after ages should be ratified by the shedding of the Blood of Jesus Christ.²

After this there was granted to Moses, Aaron, his two sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of the people, a vision of the God of Israel,³ and then Moses was summoned into the Mount of God. Leaving Aaron and Hur in charge of the people, and accompanied by Joshua, Moses went up, and he "was in the mount forty days and forty nights." The next seven chapters (Exod. xxv.—xxxi.) are occupied with the instructions given to Moses in regard to the Ark, the Tabernacle, and all their furniture. At the same time God gave unto Moses "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."⁴ But the people, tired of the long delay, had persuaded Aaron to make them "a calf in Horeb."⁵ Combining the idolatry of Egypt with their reminiscences of the faith of their fathers, and with their as yet imperfect ideas

¹ Exod. xx. 19; Heb. xii. 19.

² Exod. xxiv. 3-8; Heb. ix. 18-21, xiii. 20.

³ Exod. xxiv. 9-11.

⁴ Exod. xxxi. 18.

⁵ Ps. cvi. 19, 20.

respecting Jehovah, they appear to have intended to worship Him under the form of this calf.¹ Breaking thus so quickly after its delivery the second commandment, the people "corrupted themselves," and aroused against themselves the fierce anger of the Lord. "Let me alone," God said, "that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." And now Moses had need of all the forbearance and love for his people which so constantly animated him. Nor was he wanting. With that disinterestedness and self-denial which seems to be implied in the epithet "meek,"²—a quality which in those days was not regarded as a virtue, and which Moses, therefore, ascribes to himself without meaning to praise himself,—he was now, and on other subsequent occasions, ready to stand in the breach, and to be himself the sufferer. There would have been nothing to his dishonour if he had silently accepted the dispensation of God. But the love of Moses for his people was too great for this. "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin"—is his broken prayer: "and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."³ In thus acting as a mediator Moses prefigured the One Great Mediator, JESUS CHRIST. The people are forgiven, but God will no longer be in the midst of them. Moses removed his tent, afar off without the camp,⁴ and called it "the Tent of Meeting," because in it he met and talked with God. But this removal is a great grief to Moses. Though an Angel be sent before them, to bring them into the Promised

¹ See Exod. xxxii. 5.

² Numb. xii. 3.

³ Exod. xxxii. 32.

⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 7. Our Authorized Version is wrong in translating here "tabernacle of the congregation." It was probably Moses' own tent, and used for the purpose of meeting God, until the real tabernacle, which is expressed by a different word, was erected.

Land, it is Jehovah's presence in the midst of them which is the assurance to them of their being His chosen people. For this divine Presence Moses pleads, and once more his prayer is granted ; and to reassure him a vision of the skirts of the Divine Glory is vouchsafed to him, and the Lord stood with him on the mount, and passed by, a Voice proclaiming, "the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth."¹ Moses spent another forty days and forty nights in the mount ; the tables of the testimony, that is, of the Ten Commandments, were renewed ; and once more he descended to the camp, the radiancy of the Divine Glory being, unawares to himself, reflected in his face. "And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses . . . they were afraid to come nigh him." And when² he had spoken God's commandments to them, he put a veil over his face, to shew, as St. Paul tells us, that under that old dispensation, before the brightness of the Father's glory was seen in Jesus Christ, that glory must be shrouded from men's eyes.

Some five or six months had probably now elapsed since the Exodus. The remainder of the first year was occupied in preparing for the erection of the Tabernacle, under the guidance of Bezaleel and Aholiab, the two men inspired by God for the purpose. The account of this, and of the erection of the Tabernacle on the first day of the new year, occupies the remaining chapters of the Book of Exodus.

The construction of the Tabernacle was in accordance with the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount, which, as

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6.

² The word "till" in our Authorized Version ought to be "when." Exod. xxxiv. 33 ; 2 Cor. iii. 13.

the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us,¹ was in reality a picture or prefiguring of the Christian dispensation.

When all was completed, and the erection accomplished, the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle, and over the tent which enclosed it there rested the Divine cloud. That cloud was to be henceforth the assurance to the Israelites that Jehovah was among them.

Immediately upon the erection of the Tabernacle, Moses set it apart, with the altar, and all their vessels and furniture, to the service of God, by sprinkling them with the anointing oil. Then too, with the same oil, and with solemn sacrifices, Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priests' office. The ceremonies of consecration were repeated on each of seven successive days, and at last, upon the eighth day, the priests entered upon their office, and offered sin-offerings and burnt-offerings for themselves and the people. Then Moses and Aaron blessed the people, and "the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering."² The religious enthusiasm of the people was aroused. From the surging crowd in front of the Tabernacle there arose a great shout, and, stirred with an unwonted awe, they fell on their faces. But this day of national rejoicing ended with a great sorrow. Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron, carried away perhaps by the general excitement and rejoicing, were careless in observing the rules given them by God, and offered "strange fire"³ unto the Lord. Whatever this may have been, and its real nature is doubtful, the offering of it was punished with

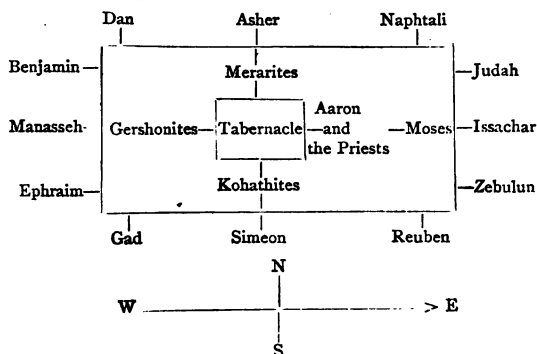
¹ Heb. viii. 5.

² Lev. ix. 23.

³ Lev. x. 1.

death, and Aaron's joy was blighted by the terrible visitation.¹

The Book of Numbers opens with God's command to Moses on the first day of the second month of the second year to number the people. This census was facilitated by the record of the offerings already made for the Tabernacle,² so that it took now but a short time, perhaps only one day, to accomplish.³ In the previous month the Passover had been solemnly observed for the second time, on the anniversary of the Exodus. Then at last on the 20th day of this second month (about May), "the cloud was taken up from off the Tabernacle of the testimony," the camp before Sinai was broken up, and the march for the Promised Land begun. The order of the march is minutely described, and may be illustrated by the following diagram :—



¹ Lev. x. 19. With the exception of chapters viii.—x. and xxiv. 10-23, the whole of the Book of Leviticus is taken up with various laws and regulations.

² Exod. xxxviii. 24-29; comp. Exod. xxx. 13.

³ Numb. i. 18.

The tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun led the way, and the rear was brought up by the children of Rachel. Hence the Psalmist sings, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth. Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up Thy strength and come and save us."¹ At each setting forward of the Ark, they sang the song:—

"Rise up Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered,
And let them which hate Thee flee before Thee."²

And when the Ark rested, they sang again:—

"Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel."³

This mighty and joyous march of a great host was not to last very long. They had travelled probably but three days' journey⁴ from Sinai when murmuring and discontent broke out at Taberah, by reason of the hardness of the march. The punishment of fire was speedy and terrible.

A very much more serious revolt broke out at the next halting-station, which from the punishment which followed was called Kibroth-hattaavah, or "The graves of lust."⁵ The hardships of the wilderness journey proved too much for the mixed multitude which went up with the Israelites, and they succeeded only too easily in dragging down the children of Israel to their own low level. The revolt took a double form:—(1) a questioning of Moses' divine mission, and (2) doubt of Jehovah's power to feed them with flesh in the wilderness. To appease the first, the Spirit of God came

¹ Psa. lxxx. 1, 2.

² Numb. x. 35; Psa. lxviii. 1, 2; Psa. cxxxii. 8.

³ Numb. x. 36; Psa. lxxx. 14.

⁴ Numb. x. 33.

⁵ Numb. xi. 34.

upon seventy elders of the people, for a short time, and though we are not told the subject of their prophecy, yet it was, not improbably, an unwilling testimony to the authority of Moses.¹ The inspiration of these men offered the occasion for that display of Moses' gentle spirit which, in this as in other things a type of Jesus Christ, envied not the prophetic powers of Eldad and Medad, though not exercised, in the proper place, before the Tabernacle.² The doubt of Jehovah's power was set at rest by the sending the quails.³ Of these they ate for a month, and then came the punishment for their sin, in a terrible disease engendered as it would seem by a surfeit of the birds' flesh.⁴

Hazereth was the next station, and here again a sore trial awaited Moses. His own relatives, Miriam and Aaron, elated probably by their own gifts of God, and certainly disliking a marriage which Moses had made with an Ethiopian woman, questioned his authority. Moses was not eager to vindicate himself,⁵ but God took the matter into His own hands, and declared that Moses stood on a higher level than any other prophets; and in a much more intimate relation with Himself. Aaron was not punished, except by rebuke, because of his priesthood, but Miriam was

¹ Numb. xi. 24-30. Eldad and Medad perhaps refused to come to the Tabernacle with the others, yet in spite of themselves they had to bear the same witness. "Did not cease" (ver. 25) ought to be "did not continue." The gift was only temporary. So rightly the LXX. These elders must not be confounded with those of Exod. xviii. and Deut. i.

² Compare Numb. xi. 29; Luke ix. 49, 50.

³ Not to be confounded with the quails of Exod. xvi. 13.

⁴ See Hengstenberg, and the *Speaker's Commentary* on Numb. xi. Compare also Psa. lxxviii. 30, 31.

⁵ Numb. xii. 1-3. Probably Zipporah was dead, and this was a second wife.

struck with leprosy, of which she was healed by Moses' intercession. The affair caused at least a delay of a week in the march.¹

The narrative now carries us on to the borders of the Promised Land. The people are in the wilderness of Paran, at or near Kadesh. As a concession to their weakness of faith, God permitted twelve men, one from each tribe, to be sent as spies of the country. They were forty days absent; and when they returned, about the middle of August, they brought with them a bunch of first ripe grapes, and gave a good account of the land. But ten of them faithlessly represented that it would be impossible for them to conquer the country. In vain did Joshua and Caleb try to still the murmurings of the people, at the risk even of their own lives.² It was the crowning rebellion, and again God would have destroyed them had not "Moses stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath."³ God pardoned, but yet He punished. For the act of utter unbelief the whole nation is condemned to wander in the wilderness, until all the men of that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, shall have died. Not one of the rest shall enter the Promised Land. Slowly and imperceptibly, so to speak, shall they die away, until not one is left.⁴

¹ Numb. xii. 15.

² Numb. xiv. 10.

³ Psa. cvi. 23.

⁴ It is worthy of remark, that as the tenth plague was the most terribly severe, so this, the tenth temptation (Numb. xiv. 22) is visited with by far the greatest punishment.

LESSON XII.

THE PENAL WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE history of the next thirty-eight years is almost, if not entirely a blank. In melancholy silence Moses passes over these years of penal wandering. The people were under the cloud of God's displeasure. Moreover, so far as they were concerned, the Covenant was practically in abeyance. During all that long time circumcision and the Passover were suspended. That it was a period of frequent discontent seems almost certain.¹ But Moses mentions only one instance,—the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, because it had to do with the Divine regulations for the civil and religious government of the people. The precise time of this event is left uncertain, but it was probably towards the end of the penal wanderings.² The leader of the revolt was Korah, who desired to put down what he considered the unwarrantable assumption of the priesthood by the family of Aaron. With him two princes of the tribe of Reuben associated them-

¹ Compare Psa. xcv. 10; Heb. iii. 17.

² See Numb. xx. 3. Psa. cvi. 17 mentions it out of its proper order before the worship of the calf.

selves, whose object was probably the assertion, in opposition to Moses, of the right of the tribe of Reuben, as that of the eldest son, to the leadership of the nation. Both Korah and Dathan and Abiram based their claim upon the promise given at Mount Sinai.¹ They forgot that before they could be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, they must learn obedience to God's will. The punishment was swift and terrible. The Levite section, whose members offered unauthorized fire, was destroyed by fire, and the Reubenites perished in an earthquake.

The only other incidents recorded of these thirty-eight years are the stoning of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day,² and the budding of Aaron's rod, a proof of the authority which God had given him, and a type of the everliving Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

At the commencement of the fortieth year³ of the wanderings, the people were again at Kadesh, ready once more to enter the Promised Land. All, or nearly all, of the generation which had rebelled thirty-eight years before are dead; a new life and a renewed hope animates the nation. Yet, on the first trial, the faith of this younger generation wavered, as that of their fathers had done, and in the same way. *This time the leaders, Moses and Aaron, were involved in the sin and its punishment.* In sorrow and despondency, perhaps at the evidence of the same stiff-necked unbelief as ever in the people, they were betrayed into rash hasty words, and weak in faith themselves, failed

¹ Exod. xix. 6.

² Numb. xv. 32-36.

³ The events of this year are recorded in the 20th and following chapters of Numbers.

to "sanctify God in the eyes of the people."¹ In their punishment we should see the plain intention of a warning to the Israelites. "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes."² The people too are punished by being compelled to reach Canaan by a long circuitous route, instead of marching straight up into the country. The journey also is rendered the more wearisome and painful from the refusal of the Edomites to allow them a passage through their territory. They move to Mount Hor, and at one of the stations in its immediate neighbourhood, Mosera, Aaron dies, although to preserve the dignity of the priesthood the actual sight of his death is hidden from all save Moses and Eleazer.³

During the thirty days' halt occasioned by the mourning for Aaron, King Arad the Canaanite obtained a slight success over the Israelites, for which vengeance was inexorably exacted afterwards.⁴

The march now for a time lay through the "terrible" wilderness of the Arabah, and again the people murmured, being "discouraged because of the way." The poisonous serpents of this region, miraculously multiplied, became the instruments of their punishment, and the cause of the erection of that wonderful type of Jesus Christ, the brazen serpent.

But the toils of the march were drawing to a close. As soon as they had gone sufficiently far to the south

¹ Numb. xx. 12. In what the sin of Moses and Aaron consisted has been a matter of much dispute. The most probable suggestion is that given in the *Bible Educator*, p. 180, viz. : that the real sin was a want of faith in not regarding the stoppage of the water supply as a sign that they were about to enter the Promised Land.

² Deut. i. 37.

³ Numb. xx. 22-29; Deut. x. 6.

⁴ Compare Numb. xxi. 1-3; Judges i. 17.

and the east to turn the flank of the Edomite country, they bent their steps northward, skirting on its east side the land of Moab, with which country the Israelites had been forbidden to make war, and crossed the river Arnon, which flowed into the Dead Sea at about the middle of its eastern side. Though the country north of this river had originally belonged to Moab, it had been lately conquered by Sihon, king of the Amorites.¹ Through this territory Moses asked leave of passage from Sihon, which was haughtily refused. No command of God, or feeling of brotherhood, as in the case of Edom, restrained the Israelites from opposing Sihon's attack upon them. He was utterly defeated, his country taken possession of, and the headquarters of the Israelites, pursuing their now western course, were established "in the plains of Moab,"² a flat, depressed stretch of country some ten or twelve miles broad, lying along the eastern side of the Jordan, near its entrance into the Dead Sea. It was bounded on the east by the Mountains of Abarim,³ of which Pisgah (or Nebo) formed one of the most prominent spurs.

The defeat of Sihon was quickly followed by that of Og, king of Bashan, the territory lying to the north of the Amorite country.⁴

Nothing now lay between the Israelites and their promised inheritance but the Jordan. They were no longer a nation in disgrace, but a people full of vigour and ardour. Before however they could cross over Jordan, certain regulations respecting the division of the land had to be made, and a successor appointed

¹ Numb. xxi. 26.

² Still so called (Numb. xxii. 1), though no longer properly within the bounds of that country.

³ Compare Numb. xxi. 11.

⁴ Numb. xxi. 33-35.

to their great leader, who was not himself to be permitted to lead his people into Canaan. The time necessary for these things, and for consolidating probably their conquests of Sihon and Og, occasioned a lengthened halt in the plain of Moab for some two or three months.¹ It was during this time that the visit took place of Balaam to Balak. The latter, frightened by the successes of the Israelites over his neighbours, determined to send for the renowned and dreaded sorcerer of the east country (Mesopotamia), in the hope that he might be induced to curse Israel, and so secure their destruction. Balaam, living in the ancient home of the Hebrew race, had gathered there, from lingering traditions, some knowledge doubtless of the true God, and we may well believe that the fame of the Exodus had reached even the remoter regions of Mesopotamia.² But his worship of God was mingled with much that was superstitious and wrong.³ To this man God had given great spiritual as well as natural gifts. But He had not taken from him the exercise of his own will. That will Balaam allowed to override him when the temptation came. "His heart was not right in the sight of God."⁴ Had it been, he would not have dallied

¹ The chronology of this fortieth year seems to be as follows:—

1st Month.—Arrival at Kadesh, and death of Miriam. March to Mount Hor, and on

5th Month, 1st day, death of Aaron.

6th Month, 1st day.—March from Mount Hor to the Plains of Moab—reached in about six weeks probably.

7th Month, middle.—Conquests of Sihon and Og.

9th Month, middle.—Episode of Balaam.

10th Month.—Second numbering. War upon the Midianites.

11th Month.—Last address of Moses. Rehearsal of the Law.

12th Month.—Death of Moses.

² Exod. ix. 16; xv. 14. Compare Exod. xviii. 1-12.

³ Numb. xxiv. 1.

⁴ Acts viii. 21.

with the temptation when presented to him, but would rather have recoiled from any proposal to curse God's chosen people. Loving the wages of unrighteousness,² and extorting from God permission to accompany the messengers of Balak, he was given up in the end to a reprobate mind. His fall however did not come all at once. It was gradual. For a time even he was borne away by the thoughts suggested by the glorious prophecies to which he was giving utterance. There is every appearance, that while he was announcing "the visions of the Almighty," he did himself desire those blessings for Israel which he declared were in store for them. But when the hour of inspiration was over, the thought of the forfeited honours and rewards overcame him, and by way of making a last grasp at them, he suggested the idea of overcoming Israel by causing them to sin against God.³ And he partially succeeded. But the plague which his evil counsel brought upon the people was stayed by the faith of Phinehas; and the man who for the sake of mammon had put away his good conscience, and of his faith made shipwreck,³ perished amid the slaughter of the Midianites, which followed quickly upon their sin against Israel.⁴ The history of Balaam teaches us how great gifts, even great spiritual gifts, may be misused and abused unless exercised "in purity of heart," and sanctified with prayer for God's grace.

Immediately after the snare set for the Israelites by the Midianites, acting under the advice of Balaam, and before the war upon the Midianites, Moses was commanded to number the Israelites a second time. The

² 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11.

³ 1 Tim. i. 19.

² Numb. xxv. 1; xxxi. 16.

⁴ Numb. xxxi. 8.

most noticeable features of this census are : (1) that notwithstanding the great mortality of the last thirty-eight years the decrease of the whole number amounted only to 1820, and would have been really an increase, but for the deaths of 24,000, in the plague following upon the sin with Midian ; and (2) that the tribe of Simeon shews a diminution of nearly one-third of its numbers. This great diminution was probably owing to this tribe having taken the chief part in the late sin, and having consequently suffered most.¹ For the same reason we may suppose it was, that in blessing the twelve tribes before his death Moses omitted all mention of Simeon.

The solemn time of the great leader's death is now fast approaching. It wants but two months to the end of the fortieth year. Moses therefore gathers his people around him, and, with unabated vigour of eye and voice, delivers to them his last charge. We seem to see the noble and stately figure of Israel's Lawgiver standing on the plains of Moab, and uttering loving words of exhortation. His eye kindles into keener brightness as he recounts the mercies of "all these forty years" passed "in the great and terrible wilderness ;" and yet again they seem dimmed with tears as, with passionate sorrow and sad forebodings, he looks forward to the future, and sees the people "utterly corrupting" themselves, and "evil befalling them."

Moses, as the Prophet of his people—as Leader, Lawgiver and Mediator,—stands alone, far above all his nation, the type and forerunner of the still greater Prophet, of whose Advent he himself foretold.² Acting under the Divine guidance, speaking with God face to

¹ See Numb. xxv. 14.

² Deut. xviii. 18 ; John i. 45 ; Acts iii. 22, vii. 37.

face, and the medium through whom a higher law than any yet known—imperfect though it was,¹—was given to the chosen people, Moses prefigured Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, One with the Father, who gave to His disciples a new law, the Law of Love, and shewed them how to interpret the Law of Moses, lifting it thus from the lower region of the letter into the higher region of the Spirit.

¹ Ezek. xx. 25.



